

Emperor and Archangel

Justinian at Germia

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For his era, the Roman emperor Justinian (r. 527–565) was a very old man when he suddenly died a natural death in the imperial palace at Constantinople in November 565. He was in his eighty-fourth year. For the past thirty-eight years he had been sole emperor. Most of that long period he had spent inside the palace complex. Integral to the court routine were regular journeys in and around the city, mainly processional and in full imperial regalia, on horseback or sitting in a carriage. Almost annually, he journeyed to a nearby summer palace along the Bosphorus or out at the Hebdomon (modern Bakırköy). Only twice did he travel as emperor beyond these boundaries of imperial infrastructure and comfort. In 559 Justinian accompanied an expedition sixty-five kilometers outside the city's land walls to Selymbria (modern Silivri), lodging at the imperial palace nearest the Long Walls that protected both the city's arable hinterland and its overland water supply. The aged emperor's morale-boosting presence was required by some urgent reconstruction, following recent earthquake damage and menacing Kutrigur Huns. Then he and his entourage returned promptly to the city with all due ceremony.¹ Justinian's

other, much longer and more challenging imperial journey into Asia Minor in October/November 563 is the subject of this investigation.

Now in his eighties, the emperor undertook a long and uncomfortable return journey to visit the pilgrimage site of the Archangel Michael at the Galatian town of Germia (modern Gümüşkonak). Why and how the sedentary Justinian undertook such a relatively arduous journey, at such an advanced age, has never been explained nor has his personal attachment to the Archangel Michael site at Germia. Works devoted to Justinian either ignore the visit altogether or mention it merely in passing.² The recent upsurge of research on angels and their veneration in late antiquity and

Context: Theodosius to Justinian (London, 2021), 253–60. The background details can be found in A. Sarantis, *Justinian's Balkan Wars: Campaigning, Diplomacy, and Development in Illyricum, Thrace and the Northern World, A.D. 527–65* (Prenton, 2016), 336–49.

2 To take only some recent examples, Justinian's expedition to Germia in 563 finds no mention at all in the lengthy and learned study of M. Meier, *Das andere Zeitalter Justinians: Kontingenzerfahrung und Kontingenzbewältigung im 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* (Göttingen, 2003), while it is treated cursorily in J. Moorhead, *Justinian* (London, 1994), 172; J. A. S. Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power* (New York, 1996), 272; G. Tate, *Justinien: L'épopée de l'Empire d'Orient* (Paris, 2004), 821; H. Leppin, *Justinian: Das christliche Experiment* (Stuttgart, 2011), 330; and P. Maraval, *Justinien: Le rêve d'un empire chrétien universel* (Paris, 2016), 314. More alert to the significance of the journey and the route is Michael Whitby, *The Wars of Justinian* (Barnsley, 2021), 20.

1 Peter the Patrician, *On the Ceremonies* (J. F. Haldon, ed. and trans., *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, CFHB 28 [Vienna, 1990], 139; A. Moffatt and M. Tall, trans., *Constantine Porphyrogenetos: The Book of Ceremonies* [Canberra, 2012], 1:497–98); B. Croke, "Justinian's Constantinople," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), 60–67; and B. Croke, *Roman Emperors in*

Byzantium,³ combined with new archaeological analysis of ruins at the site of Germia itself,⁴ has made possible a fuller understanding of this episode. Closer attention to the role of Archangel Michael in Justinian's political calculus, as well as the emperor's long attraction to the archangel's site at Germia, helps explain Justinian's motivation for the lengthy imperial journey, there and back, in 563.

For the Year of the World 6056 (corresponding to AD 563/564), the ninth-century chronicler Theophanes says this:

Τούτω τῷ ἔτει μηνὶ Ὀκτωβρίῳ ἰνδικτικῶνος ιβ' ἀπῆλθεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς χάριν εὐχῆς ἐν τοῖς Μυριαγγέλλοις ἡγουν ἐν Γερμίοις πόλει τῆς Γαλατίας. (In this year, in October of the twelfth indiction [commencing 1 September 563], the emperor Justinian, in fulfillment of a vow, visited Myriangeloi, otherwise known as Germia, a city in Galatia.)⁵

3 On angels, see G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley, CA, 2001); R. F. Johnson, *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge, 2005); R. Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 172 (Leiden, 2011); J. C. Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c. 300–c. 800* (New York, 2013); E. Muchlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity* (New York, 2013); M. Ahuvia, *On My Right Michael, on My Left Gabriel: Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture* (Oakland, CA, 2021); and several contributions in D. Lauritzen, ed., *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance: Conception, représentation, perception* (Paris, 2021).

4 On Germia, see P. Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity: Western Galatia during the Roman and Byzantine Period," *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* 28.1 (2010): 47–66; P. Niewöhner and K. Rheidt, "Die Michaelskirche in Germia (Galatien, Türkei): Ein kaiserlicher Wallfahrtsort und sein provinzielles Umfeld," *AA 1* (2010): 137–60; P. Niewöhner, "Germia," in *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia: From the End of Late Antiquity until the Coming of the Turks*, ed. P. Niewöhner (New York, 2017), 342–48; and P. Niewöhner, "Healing Springs of Anatolia: St. Michael and the Problem of the Pagan Legacy," in *Life Is Short, Art Long: The Art of Healing in Byzantium; New Perspectives*, ed. B. Pitarakis and G. Tanman (Istanbul, 2018), 97–124.

5 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6056 (C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis Chronographia*, vol. 1, *Textum graecum continens* [Leipzig, 1883], 240, lines 11–13, and C. Mango and R. Scott, trans., *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near East History, AD 284–813* [New York, 1997], 353), noting that "visited" may be too decisive a translation in that Justinian may not have "visited" Germia in October 563 but rather that he set out (or departed) from

Although this event is explicitly attested by Theophanes alone, he probably copied it from the original contemporary chronicle of John Malalas (writing in the late 560s) because Theophanes relies on Malalas for so much of his own information on the latter part of the reign of Justinian. There is no reason to think that he did not continue to employ Malalas until 565, when Malalas concluded with the death of Justinian.⁶ What Malalas (and Theophanes) are saying here is that it was in fulfillment of a certain vow (χάριν εὐχῆς) that Justinian undertook the longest journey of his long imperial life, deep into Asia Minor. Although Theophanes refers to the place by its sixth-century name of Myriangeloi,⁷ the extant and abbreviated text of Malalas (as reflected in Theophanes) fails to say that there is only one reason

Constantinople in that month: that is, taking ἀπῆλθεν at its literal meaning (see LSJ, s.v. ἀπέρχομαι).

6 Unfortunately, the manuscript that provides the backbone of the text of Malalas (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Codex Barrociensis 182) breaks off at the previous year (562/563), but up to this point Theophanes had been following his sixth-century source closely, hence the inclusion of material from Theophanes in the modern edition and translation of Malalas for the years 563–565: John Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.148 (I. Thurn, ed., *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia* [Berlin, 2000], 431; E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and R. Scott, trans., *The Chronicle of John Malalas* [Melbourne, 1986], 305). The attribution of this section of Theophanes to Malalas has been clarified by E. Jeffreys, "The Transmission of Malalas' Chronicle," in *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. Scott (Sydney, 1990), 245–311, at 258, and explained further in R. Scott, "Writing the Reign of Justinian: Malalas versus Theophanes," in *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?*, ed. P. Allen and E. Jeffreys (Brisbane, 1996), 20–34 (repr. in R. Scott, *Byzantine Chronicles and the Sixth Century* [Farnham, 2012]); R. Scott, "Narrating Justinian: From Malalas to Manasses," in *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, ed. J. Burke et al. (Melbourne, 2006), 29–46 (repr. in Scott, *Byzantine Chronicles*); and R. Scott, "Theophanes and Early Byzantine History: The First Half of Theophanes' Chronicle," in *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. M. Jankowiak and F. Montinaro (Paris, 2015), 239–60. See also I. Rochow, "Malalas bei Theophanes," *Klio* 65.1–2 (1983): 459–74.

7 The place was called Myriangeloi at least by 553 when it is recorded because its bishop Menas attended the Council of Constantinople: *ACO* 4.1: "de Myriangelis" (6.15, 22.38, 35.9, 41.39, 206.6), "Myriangeli" (228.5). The only other "Myriangeloi" in the province was not a bishopric but a church, located outside the provincial capital of Pessinus (*Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 101.42 [A.-J. Festugière, ed., *Vie de Théodore de Sykeon*, vol. 1, *Texte grec* (Brussels, 1970), 81]). Another local name for Germia was simply "The Archangels" (*Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 167.34 [Festugière, *Vie*, 155]). Although Menas is not recorded as representing the absent episcopal metropolis of Pessinus at the council, it is possible that he did so. The reconstruction of the attendees in R. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553* (Liverpool, 2009), 2:289, n. 9, confuses "Germia" with "Germa."

the octogenarian emperor would ever contemplate such a trip there, namely, to pay homage to the Archangel Michael. Such a conspicuous and unusual absence from the court and capital required a convincing explanation, so it has to be assumed that the “vow” Theophanes (Malalas) mentions was publicly known and affirmed. The Archangel Michael had been solemnly invoked before,⁸ but this invocation was to involve the emperor and his entourage in a round trip of some 1,200 kilometers. So, what could have sparked Justinian’s vow?

Interpreting Justinian’s Vow

Justinian’s support and promotion of the cult of Archangel Michael throughout the empire was long manifest. Archangel Michael had always appeared on the emperor’s gold solidi coinage and on other imperially sponsored iconography. Numerous shrines and churches were built or refurbished by Justinian to honor the archangel both at Constantinople and throughout the provinces,⁹ while his major feasts were

now entrenched in the liturgical calendar.¹⁰ Oaths of imperial service were taken in his name, and it was during Justinian’s reign that aristocrats came to include “Michael” among their several names.¹¹ Moreover, Michael had become the *archistrategos*, the guarantor of political stability, orthodoxy, and legitimacy for an emperor.¹² The term *archistrategos* was applied to Michael from as early as the third century.¹³ In the time of Justinian we find it being used by Malalas,¹⁴ as well as on inscriptions at places like Philomelion (modern Akşehir) and Ephesus.¹⁵

From the outset of Justinian’s reign, Michael was already being represented on imperial solidi as the embodiment of an emperor’s victoriousness.¹⁶ On the well-known British Museum ivory (dating to the 520s), Michael holds a *globus cruciger* (a globe topped with a jeweled cross) in his right hand and a scepter in his

8 An example is the two inscriptions dedicated by the *actuarius* Kyriakos that were found on the island of Aigiale. They both read εἰς τὸν ἄγιον Μιχαήλ (details in P. Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E01269, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01269>). There are two extant sixth-century seals invoking Michael’s help (ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΒΟΗΘΗ): J. A. Cotsonis, *The Religious Figural Imagery of Byzantine Lead Seals II: Studies on Images of the Saints and on Personal Piety* (Abingdon, 2020), 102–4, 145.

9 Churches: details in R. Janin, “Les sanctuaires byzantins de saint Michel (Constantinople et banlieue),” *EO* 33.173 (1934): 28–52, and R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire byzantin*, part 1, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, book 3, *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969); icons: *Anthologia Palatina* 1.34–35, with Peers, *Bodies*, 95–103; coinage: A. Bellinger, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. 1, *Anastasius I to Maurice (491–602)* (Washington, DC, 1966), 62–193, and W. Hahn, *Money of the Incipient Byzantine Empire (Anastasius I–Justinian I, 491–565)* (Vienna, 2000), 42–71 (that is, assuming the unnamed angel is actually Archangel Michael, and there are sound reasons for so assuming, not least the considered judgment of expert numismatists [e.g., P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (Berkeley, CA, 1982), 35]); oaths: Justinian, *Novellae* 8 (*CIC Nov* 89; D. J. D. Miller and P. Sarris, eds., *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation* [Cambridge, 2018], 154), and M. Wuk, “Constructing Christian Bureaucrats: Justinian and the Governor’s Oath of Office,” *JLA* 15.2 (2022): 462–93; and on how religious practice impacted the formation and wording of oaths: M. Wuk, “Provincial Negotiation of Religious Tensions: Late Antique Oath-Formulae in the Greek Documentary Papyri,” *ZPapEpig* 215 (2020): 237–56.

10 Orthodox Eastern Church, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église: Ms. Sainte-Croix no. 40, X^e siècle*, trans. J. Mateos (Rome, 1962), 1:194.14 (11 January, “myriads”), 310.5 (9 June), 312.12 (11 June), 316.7 (19 June), 350.13 (26 July), 16.16 (6 September), 68.24 (16 October, Gabriel), 94.9 (8 November), 126.17 (10 December). Most of these feasts were in place by the sixth century. In the 530s, the feast celebrated at Constantinople on 8 November was also celebrated at Oxyrhynchus (*POxy.* 1357).

11 E.g., “Fl. Marianus Micahelius Gabrihelius Petrus Iohannis Narses Aurelianus Limenius Stefanus Aurelianus” (*PLRE* 3:156); cf. others at *PLRE* 3:145–46, 639, 736–37, with yet others in inscriptions noted by D. Feissel and I. Kaygusuz, “Un mandement imperial du VI^e siècle dans une inscription d’Hadrianopolis d’Honoriate,” *TM* 9 (1985): 397–419 (repr. in D. Feissel, *Documents, droit, diplomatique de l’Empire romain tardif* [Paris, 2010], 223–50, at 225).

12 J. P. Rohland, *Der Erzengel Michael: Arzt und Feldherr; Zwei Aspekte des vor- und frühbyzantinischen Michaelskultes* (Leiden, 1977), 124–26.

13 G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), s.v. ἀρχιστράτηγος, no. 3. The term is used to indicate Michael as God’s commander-in chief in the Septuagint in Josh. 5:13 (ἐγὼ ἀρχιστράτηγος τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ Κυρίου) (I am the commander-in-chief of the Lord’s force), as interpreted in the third-century commentary on Joshua by Origen, *Selecta in Iesum Nave* (PG 12:821D).

14 Malalas, *Chronicle* 16.16 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 330*22 [τὸν ναὸν τοῦ ἀρχιστρατήγου Μιχαήλ]; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 226).

15 Philomelion (Pisidia): *MAMA VII*, no. 207, online at *Inscriptions Christianae Graecae*, no. 618 (<http://www.epigraph.topoi.org/>); and Ephesus: *I. Ephesos*, no. 4145 (ἀρχιστράτηγε).

16 Peers, *Bodies*, 49–51, with examples in Hahn, *Money*, 112–14, pls. 13, 14. Again, this is assuming with Peers that the angel on the solidi is meant to be Michael (cf. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins*, 35).

left. These are the key symbols of imperial power.¹⁷ In churches he was attired in imperial regalia and holding the scepter of sovereignty.¹⁸ For example, in the sixth-century church of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, near Ravenna, a colored mosaic displays the same image where the archangel wears the purple imperial tunic.¹⁹ By 515, a similar image in the Church of Michael in Antioch was attacked by patriarch Severus who decried the “presumptuous” craftsmen for depicting Michael and Gabriel “in the manner of lords or kings with a royal robe of purple” and with a crown, as well as for placing “in their right hand the sign of rulership and universal authority.”²⁰ There may also have been an imperial depiction of Archangel Michael at Germia in the church that the emperor Justinian rebuilt.

Germia was a small, unfortified, and out-of-the-way destination. Its fame rested on its status as the location of healing waters attributed to Archangel Michael. One obvious explanation for Justinian's extraordinary expedition to Germia in 563, therefore, is pure piety, or pious obligation toward Archangel Michael. Piety alone, however, is insufficient to explain the venture. A pious need for supplicating Michael could easily have been satisfied locally. Germia was a pilgrimage center for Archangel Michael too, but it was much further away and involved a far more complicated, time-consuming, and lengthy journey from Constantinople. That Justinian made Germia his destination in 563 suggests a more complex motive than a mere desire to honor the archistrategos or seek his healing power. Indeed, it is more likely to have been in relation to his preservation from some personal crisis, that is to say, not unlike the vow of the exiled emperor Zeno (r. 474–491), who promised to construct a church at St. Thecla's shrine at Seleucia in 475/476 if he gained

back his throne.²¹ A vow like that of Zeno, just as that of another emperor, Theodosius II (r. 401–450), proclaimed in 443, originates in the “condition of the state” (*statui rei publicae*).²² Theodosius was drawing a lesson from his own vow (*voti causa*) leading to a pilgrimage to Aphrodisias during which he passed through Heraclea. There he was petitioned by the locals about the deficient state of their walls, their aqueduct, and other public facilities.²³ Further, the sisters of Theodosius had previously vowed a column and statue to their brother as emperor, should he be victorious against the Huns and Persians in the early 420s.²⁴ These are all very specific vows, in addition to the more general vows (*vota publica*) undertaken periodically by emperors every five years and advertised on their coinage. Justinian's vow to visit Germia is best seen as being the product of a specific set of circumstances, like those of Theodosius II and Zeno before him.

17 For the details of the ivory and identification of the angel with Michael, see O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (London, 1911), 200; J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (New Haven, CT, 1986), 86; and A. Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche* (Darmstadt, 1970), 228–38. For the date, see A. Cutler, “The Making of the Justinian Diptychs,” *Byzantion* 54.1 (1984): 112.

18 Arnold, *Footprints*, 82–83.

19 Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation*, 169.

20 Severus, *Homilies* 72 (PO 12.1:834) (P. Allen and C. T. R. Hayward, trans., *Severus of Antioch* [London, 2004], 132).

21 Evagrius, *HE* 3.8, and H. Elton, “Alahan and Zeno,” *AnatSt* 52 (2002): 153. Similarly, Nicholas of Sion made a vow (τὴν εὐχὴν) to travel to the Holy Land from his native Lycia (*Vita Nicolai Sionitae* 9, in *The Life of Nicholas of Sion*, ed. and trans. I. Ševčenko and N. P. Ševčenko [Brookline, MA, 1984], 30–31); the same sort of vow was made by a certain pilgrim to visit Daniel the Stylite near Constantinople in the 470s (*Vita Danielis Stylitae* 87 [H. Delehaye, ed., *Les saints stylites* (Brussels, 1923), 82, line 25: γενομένης εὐχῆς]) and by Hypatius to visit the Holy Land if he were released from his captivity by Vitalian (Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vita Sabae* 56 [E. Schwartz, *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig, 1939), 151, line 15: εὐχῆς ἔνεκεν]).

22 Theodosius, *Novellae* 23 (Aphrodisias, 22 May 443): *Tunc enim maxime vota proficiunt, cum statui rei publicae, quae causa votorum est, consulatur* (T. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer, eds., *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes* [Berlin, 1905], 2:60–61). Around the same time, Theodosius II's wife, the empress Eudocia, linked her vow (ταύτην εὐχὴν) to see Jerusalem with their daughter finally being married (καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ ταύτην εὐχὴν ἐπιτελέσειν ἐπηγγέλλετο, ἐὰν τὴν θυγατέρα γαμηθεῖσαν ἐπόψῃται [for she had promised to fulfill this vow if she saw her daughter married] [Socrates, *HE* 7.47]).

23 F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408–450)* (Berkeley, CA, 2006), 9–10, 92; cf. S. Destephen, “From Mobile Center to Constantinople: The Birth of Byzantine Imperial Government,” *DOP* 73 (2019): 20–21.

24 An inscription at the Hebdomon outside of Constantinople reads [*victor pro*] *votis sororum*; see R. Demangel, *Contribution à la topographie de l'Hebdomon* (Paris, 1945), 33–40, as explained in B. Croke, “Evidence for the Hun Invasion of Thrace in A.D. 422,” *GRBS* 18.4 (1977): 347–67, at 365–366 (repr. in B. Croke, *Christian Chronicles and Byzantine History, 5th–6th Centuries* [Brookfield, VT, 1992]).

Some view the aged Justinian's journey to Germia as nothing more than a desperate quest to restore waning health through the archangel's intercession. Like the piety to which it is linked, waning health also seems too low a bar for such a long-distance venture. Certainly, the emperor had been ill on previous occasions, once with the plague. On those occasions, however, he sought help (even saintly succor) locally, and he prevailed.²⁵ As far as can be ascertained, however, Justinian was not suffering from any debilitating ailment in 563, thereby necessitating such a lengthy journey. If all he needed in 563 was some miracle cure, or relief from illness, he had only to venture as far as the sacred waters of the Pege shrine at the city walls, where he had earlier enlarged the shrine.²⁶ If it was the particular intervention of Archangel Michael he was seeking, he would surely have satisfied himself by traveling up the Bosphorus to the Michaelion at Anaplis, or across the Sea of Marmara to Pythia, where he and his wife Theodora had earlier developed a shrine for the archangel. It was a popular destination for pilgrims from Constantinople.²⁷ The beneficial effects of health-related pilgrimage were never amplified by distance; hence a detailed analysis of later Byzantine documents shows pilgrims who traveled in quest of a healing shrine ventured only a short distance from home.²⁸ Germia, by contrast, involved Justinian in traveling an unprecedented distance for his reign.

Students of Justinian have never paid much attention to this episode, beyond expressing surprise

that such an old emperor should want to travel so far. Hence, it tends to be cast as an aberration from a devout but out-of-touch ruler securing his heavenly fortune as he approaches his earthly demise.²⁹ Georges Tate is exceptional in insisting that in 563 "ce grand sédentaire" (Justinian) was still an active ruler engaged on several fronts as he always had been, so this pilgrimage had less to do with his own personal safety and was more symbolic of his perpetual pursuit of public piety and Christian unity.³⁰ As usual, Ernst Stein is virtually the only one who has paused over the detail, noting too how unusual it was for the most sedentary of all emperors to suddenly undertake the long trip to Germia, especially as an octogenarian. Unlike Tate, Stein's explanation is that this episode is simply another indication of how Justinian had disconnected himself from day-to-day imperial duties to focus on his own spiritual welfare. What drove him to Germia was a need to venerate "a supposed tunic of the Lord."³¹

Leaving aside Stein's questionable judgment about Justinian's personal activism in the 560s, the notion that the emperor undertook this extraordinary venture in 563 just to venerate "a supposed tunic of the Lord" is at least contestable. First of all, this "supposed tunic of the Lord" cannot be dated until after Justinian's reign, when its preservation story is first told by Gregory of Tours in his *De gloria martyrum* (written in the mid-580s) and in the following century by Fredegarius, who was likely to have known Gregory's account but offered a separate version altogether. Gregory says he is relying on hearsay (*ferunt*) when he tells how the tunic

25 Justinian's known illnesses: in 523 while his uncle Justin was emperor (Procopius, *Secret History* 9.35–41); plague in 542 (Procopius, *Wars* 2.23.20 and Procopius, *Secret History* 4.1–3); almost dead but cured by the intervention of Saints Cosmas and Damian at an unknown date (Procopius, *Buildings* 1.6.5–6); serious knee ailment that was cured by a reliquary in the late 540s(?) (Procopius, *Buildings* 1.7.6–15); and a "headache" (migraine?) in 560 (Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6053 [de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:234, lines 26–27; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 345]).

26 The shrine of the Virgin lay in a grove surrounding the spring outside the Silivri Gate. Justinian built both a church and a monastery there at some point; for details, see I. Kimmelfield, "The Shrine of the Theotokos at the Pege," in *Fountains and Water Culture in Byzantium*, ed. B. Shilling and P. Stephenson (Cambridge, 2016), 299–313.

27 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.3.16–20, and Rohland, *Erzengel*, 98–99. In 337, the emperor Constantine had diverted to the healing waters there after feeling ill on his way to the East (Socrates, *HE* 1.37.1–2).

28 A.-M. Talbot, "Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: The Evidence of Miracle Accounts," *DOP* 56 (2002): 164–65.

29 Moorhead, *Justinian*, 172; Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 272 ("He was a troubled man"); and Leppin, *Justinian*, 330 ("vielleicht er sich höheren Unterstützung versichern"). For students of Christian pilgrimage, Justinian's expedition has been equally explained away, for example, as "une angoisse spirituelle" or "un acte isolé au sein de son règne" (S. Destephen, "Le prince chrétien en pèlerinage," *TM* 22.2 [2018]: 307) or merely "Justinien vieillissant" (P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient: Histoire et géographie, des origines à la conquête arabe*, 2nd ed. [Paris, 2004], 370).

30 Tate, *Justinien*, 820–21.

31 E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, vol. 2, *De la disparition de l'Empire d'Occident à la mort de Justinien (476–565)* (Paris, 1949), 777: "cet empereur, le plus sédentaire de tous, n'avait quitté la capitale que pour résider de temps en temps dans la partie de la Thrace avoisinant Constantinople, il se résolut, en octobre 563, à entreprendre, déjà octogénaire, un long voyage jusqu'en Galatie pour aller en pèlerinage à l'église des Archanges (ou de Saint-Michel) de Germia, où l'on vénérait une prétendue tunique de Seigneur."

of Christ was currently (580s) being venerated in an unidentified “Galatian town,” in a church dedicated to the “holy archangels.” The town was “about 150 miles” from Constantinople. Gregory’s informants—whether firsthand, secondhand, or thirdhand is unknowable—further told him that the church had a deep crypt where the venerable relic was contained in a wooden box.³² Gregory’s language is certainly unclear. By “civitatem Galatae,” he would appear to be indicating a town in the Roman province of Galatia rather than a town called “Galatae,” although that is certainly a feasible option.³³ An identification with Germia is also possible, as Stein presumed, because it was located in Galatia and had a church of the Archangel Michael. Yet Germia is not 150 miles from Constantinople but more than twice as far.³⁴ Besides Germia, however, there were many other churches dedicated to Michael in Galatia, as in other provinces in Asia Minor (particularly Phrygia and Lycia),³⁵ and at least one dedicated to the “Myriangeli” outside Pessinus.³⁶ Nor is it clear how such a unique relic as Christ’s tunic could have ended up in Germia

rather than somewhere more ecclesiastically and geographically prominent, not to mention somewhere closer to its original Palestinian location. Christ’s tunic is not otherwise associated with the Archangel Michael but is completely separate, so it is not apparent why it would be in a church specifically dedicated to Michael, either at Germia or elsewhere.

While Gregory might be construed as reporting a relic that could be found at Germia well before he heard about it, Fredegarius only compounds the difficulties by dating the discovery of Christ’s tunic to 590, at a place called Zaphrod (probably Sepphoris) in Palestine.³⁷ Later traditions are no help either. One tradition places the tunic of Christ in Trier and seeks to trace its arrival there to the early fourth century, although its earliest attestation there is in the eleventh century. Another tradition has Christ’s tunic proffered to Charlemagne as a wedding gift by the Byzantine empress Irene. Their marriage never took place, but the relic ended up in a Carolingian convent at Argenteuil, near Paris. Even so, the Argenteuil tunic is not actually attested before the twelfth century either.³⁸ Gregory of Tours’s account is therefore hardly a compelling case, although it has passed uncritically into the recent literature on Germia.³⁹ On the other hand, one contemporary who knew and visited the Michael pilgrimage site at Germia, and similar sites elsewhere, was Theodore of Sykeon (d. 613), but he never mentions any attraction at Germia other than veneration of Michael and some

32 B. Krusch, ed., *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, vol. 1.2, *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis miracula et opera minora* (Hanover, 1885), 42–43. This instance is not cited in Averil Cameron, “The Byzantine Sources of Gregory of Tours,” *JTS* 26 (1975): 421–26 (repr. in Averil Cameron, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* [London, 1981]), although her conclusion that Gregory had direct access to information about Eastern events, orally in this case and far less reliable, is applicable here too.

33 E.g., R. Van Dam, *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool, 1988), 9, n. 13: “Galatea is probably the city of Galatz, north of Constantinople/Istanbul in Romania.”

34 Hence, we have the cavalier suggestion of emending Gregory’s “CL” to “CCL,” advanced by E. Honigmann, “Pour l’atlas byzantine,” *Byzantion* 11.2 (1936): 553.

35 For Galatia, see *Vita Theodori Sykeonis* 35.17 (Festugière, *Vie*, 31); for modern Çiftlikköy (or Çiftlik) near Ankara, see P. Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E00996, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E00996>. The Çiftlikköy inscriptions actually name Justinian in setting the boundaries of the Archangel Michael church and are published in S. Mitchell, *Regional Epigraphic Catalogues of Asia Minor II: The Ankara District; The Inscriptions of North Galatia* (Oxford, 1982), 173–75 (nos. 207–8). For Phrygia, see details in F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370–529* (Leiden, 1993), 1:152–56; Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 158–65; and P. Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E00915, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E00915>. In Lycia, several are named, although their modern locations are not always identifiable; see *Vita Nicolai Sionitae* 54 (Traglassos), 55 (Plenios), 56 (Nea Kome), 57 (Symbolon and Trebendai), 70 (Krova).

36 *Vita Theodori Sykeonis* 101.40 (Festugière, *Vie*, 81).

37 The tunic, according to Fredegarius, was then brought into Jerusalem in a great procession involving the patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, as well as Jerusalem, and deposited in the Church of the Resurrection constructed by Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. The veracity of Fredegarius’s account is debatable (cf. H. Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* [Cambridge, 2015], 190); for example, there is no evidence that the bishops of Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem were ever together in Palestine.

38 It now resides in a large glass reliquary in the Basilica of St. Denis at Argenteuil and is occasionally displayed for reverence. For background, see J. Nickell, *Relics of the Christ* (Lexington, KY, 2007), 104–6; for dates and further detail, see C. Billot, “Des reliques de la Passion dans le royaume de France,” in *Byzance et les reliques du Christ*, ed. J. Durand and B. Flusin (Paris, 2004), 239–48.

39 E.g., C. Mango, “St. Michael and Attis,” *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έπ.*, 4th ser., 12 (1984): 49; Tate, *Justinien*, 820; P. Niewöhner et al., “Bronze Age Höyüks, Iron Age Hilltop Forts, Roman Poleis and Byzantine Pilgrimage in Germia and Its Vicinity: ‘Connectivity’ and a Lack of ‘Definite Places’ on the Central Anatolian High Plateau,” *AnatSt* 63 (2013): 98; and Niewöhner, “Healing Springs,” 110.

relics of St. George.⁴⁰ So unique and important a relic as Christ's tunic would hardly go unremarked. There is therefore no need to think, let alone propose as Stein has done with others following him to the present day, that Justinian was attracted to Germia in 563 by the very presence of the tunic of Christ. For present purposes, it can be safely discarded. His motives lay elsewhere.

In particular, a more complex and likely motive for Justinian's journey is suggested by focusing on his long involvement with both the cult of Archangel Michael as archistrategos at Constantinople and at Germia before his visit in 563, as well as with the background events of 562/563, which gave rise to his "vow" in the first place. In the absence of an explicit statement in the solitary testimony of Theophanes, however, there is a need to seek out the likely circumstances that prompted Justinian's vow to visit the Germia shrine of Archangel Michael. Like any vow, it was no casual decision. The vow is more likely to be primarily associated with a crisis of sovereignty. Such a crisis would have involved Justinian's position and power being imperiled by a pressing political situation. Hence, he called on the divine assistance of the archistrategos Archangel Michael, adding a vow to venerate the archangel by visiting his major shrine at Germia.

That Justinian narrowly survived precisely such a crisis in January 532 during the Nika riots is well-known and well recorded. Not so well-known, however, nor so well recorded is the perilous situation he faced in 562. First, he was obliged to confront faction riots at Constantinople that threatened to spiral out of control in late 561 and 562, quickly followed in November 562 by a full-blown conspiracy against his life and throne that was only thwarted at the very last minute. His potential assassins were already entering the palace. Somewhere in these events is likely to be found the desperate response of Justinian that involved a vow to Archangel Michael as the archistrategos, however impulsive and unthinking he may have been in making his vow. Vows had been made to Michael before, such as that of Trophimus at Kidyessos in Phrygia.⁴¹ Now,

imperial officials invoked Michael in vows they swore on appointment to Emperor Justinian.⁴² It would be no surprise to find Justinian invoking Michael in his own vows. Presumably publicly witnessed, that vow in 562 was a vow Justinian would be expected to keep, even though it would have been much easier for him to simply forget his vow or downplay its import. Age and distance could easily excuse him.

Archangel Michael and Justinian's Vow

The years 562 and 563, Justinian's thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth years as emperor, were arguably the most unstable and unpredictable part of his rule for the past thirty years. They were preceded by lethal communal violence between the rival Greens and Blues in 560 and 561, plus a conspiracy to replace him as emperor in 560. Yet these years are not normally given the close attention they require. Instead, they tend to be compressed or skated over as part of Justinian's "final years."⁴³ Now in his eighties, and with an unusually long reign behind him, Justinian still remained conscious of just how close he came to forfeiting his throne in 532, the last time violence and arson by the Blues and Greens threatened imperial sovereignty. By now too, he had Procopius's popular account to remind him, especially that he had to overcome a proclaimed usurper to the throne in Hypatius.⁴⁴ In the intervening period, he had become much more confident and much better positioned to deal with opposition and conspiracies to unseat him. He had successfully dealt with one major plot initiated by a vengeful Artabanes in 548,⁴⁵ while late in 560, the city prefect Gerontius and his associates were accused by a former praetorian prefect of the East, Eugenius, of plotting to replace Justinian with Theodore, son of one

42 Justinian, *Novellae* 8 (*CIC Nov* 89; Miller and Sarris, *Novels of Justinian*, 154).

43 E.g., Evans, *Age of Justinian*, 253 ("The final decade of Justinian's reign reads like the transcript of the Last Judgement upon his administration"); Moorhead, *Justinian*, 169; and Leppin, *Justinian*, 316–36 ("Ende in Isolation").

44 Procopius, *Wars* 1.24 (cf. Procopius, *Buildings* 1.1.20–21).

45 Procopius, *Wars* 7.32. Justinian's pardon of the conspirator Artabanes on this occasion was promoted as an exemplary indication of his clemency (lat. *clementia*; gr. *φιλανθρωπία*), as explained in D. A. Parnell, "Justinian's Clemency and God's Clemency," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 30 (2020): 16–17.

40 *Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 71.5 (Festugière, *Vie*, 58). Moorhead, *Justinian*, 172, implies that George's remains were already in Germia in 563, which seems unlikely. They were the personal property of a later bishop.

41 *MAMA* XI, no. 167 (cf. *MAMA* IX, no. 551 [seeking Michael's protection for a sick child]).

of the emperor's most loyal officials, Peter the Patrician.⁴⁶ Having survived the plot in 560, the emperor was sorely tested again in 561 and 562. The records are scanty for these years when the poorly preserved chronicle of John Malalas provides the only substantial contemporary, or near-contemporary, account. Although it is not possible to link Justinian's vow to visit Germia incontrovertibly to events in these years, both the timing and the circumstances of 562/563 were the very sort to stimulate such a personal safety vow involving the legitimizing protection of Archangel Michael. Such a link is therefore very plausible.

Justinian's anxiety would have increased when on Wednesday, 12 October 561, late at night, a large blaze raged from Caesarius's quarter near the Marmara harbor all the way up to the Forum Bovis, destroying all the workshops and porticos along the way.⁴⁷ Violence between Blues and Greens may have provided the trigger. A month later (November 561), serious civil strife (δημοτική ταραχή) between the factions erupted in the hippodrome before Justinian had arrived to view the Saturday races. The Greens had set upon the Blues, usually favored by Justinian. When the news reached the emperor inside the imperial palace, he hurried up to the imperial box to see the situation for himself. Immediately, he dispatched the *comes domesticorum*, who led the various contingents of the palace guard, presumably with an armed force, to separate the rioting factions. Unfortunately, they failed to quell the mayhem. Many Blues and Greens had already been killed. Many more were wounded. Justinian was not reconciled with the Greens until Christmas 561.⁴⁸ This was the most severe and fatal rioting since the 530s and a reminder to Justinian of how urban violence and destruction could threaten an emperor's position as well.

While Justinian may have hoped that was the end of the matter, the severe rioting in October to

December 561 was only the destabilizing prelude to events in 562. On 3 May, it emerged that another plot was being hatched to depose Justinian. This time, his late wife Theodora's relatives George and John accused Zemarchos (*curator* of the palace of Placidia) of making several "terrible statements against the emperor" (κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως πολλὰ λalήσας καὶ δεινά).⁴⁹ Zemarchus was dismissed.⁵⁰ Only a week later, the deep antagonism between the Blues and Greens, which had ended up threatening Justinian in October to December 561, once again flared up. The traditional 11 May games in the Hippodrome were always a cause of great celebration of the foundation over two centuries earlier of what was now the flourishing Roman capital of Constantinople. In 562, however, doubtless in response to well-placed fear of factional violence, Justinian postponed the celebration for two days to 13 May 562. Meanwhile, the warehouses along the shore near the Neorion harbor were incinerated. These were the warehouses that stored the oil, wine, and even some grain essential for the city's population.⁵¹ Spoiling or destroying them had serious repercussions. While the violence raged, Justinian presumably remained within the safety of the palace but uncertain about what might happen next.

The violence in May 562, tantamount to a battle (μάχη, Malalas), lasted for two days and nights and constituted a severe threat to the government and authority of Justinian. His position had become almost as precarious as it had in 532 as he sought safety inside the palace. In the end, Justinian sent out the chief of his personal guard, the *comes excubitorum*, Marinus. This time he was accompanied by the *curopalates* (later emperor) Justin with a large military contingent, just as Justinian had dispensed Belisarius and other military leaders in 532 to enforce order at the point of the sword. Even so, Marinus and Justin had great difficulty bringing the factional rioters to heel. The city was barely under control, and despite its massive physical and military protection,

46 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6053 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:235, lines 1–7; Mango and Scott, *Chronicles of Theophanes*, 345), and *PLRE* 3:1255–56 ("Theodorus 34").

47 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6054 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:235, lines 26–29; Mango and Scott, *Chronicles of Theophanes*, 347).

48 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6054 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:235.20–236.16; Mango and Scott, *Chronicles of Theophanes*, 347), which was presumably copied from Malalas and is lacunose at this point (cf. Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.131–32 [Thurn, *Chronographia*, 422; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 298–99]).

49 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6054 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:237, lines 1–4; Mango and Scott, *Chronicles of Theophanes*, 347).

50 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.134 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 423, app. crit.; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 300), and *PLRE* 3:1253 ("Theodorus 25").

51 M. Mundell Mango, "The Commercial Map of Constantinople," *DOP* 54 (2000): 193, and P. Magdalino, "The Maritime Neighborhoods of Constantinople: Commercial and Residential Functions, Sixth to Twelfth Centuries," *DOP* 54 (2000): 211–12.

the palace could not easily secure the emperor and court for much longer. It was not far from the imperial palace that the Blues fomented another outbreak of violence in October 562, this time in the Pittakia. Again, Justinian punished a great many of them.⁵²

No sooner had the faction rioting in October 562 been contained for the time being than another threatening plot against the emperor emerged the next month (November).⁵³ On this occasion, the plotters were a mixture of senior imperial administrators and officials in the employ of certain Roman aristocrats. The ringleader appears to have been a leading senator, Aetherius, who was curator of the house of Antiochus and had previously been accused of plotting against Justinian in 560. Those committed to murdering the emperor were (1) Marcellus, a financial manager or money changer (*ἀργυροπράτης*, literally “silversmith”) from the household of Aetherius, who borrowed fifty pounds of gold from a certain Isaac to secure the involvement of (2) Ablabius, who was the son of a musician (*μελιστής*), Meltiades, and (3) Sergius, the nephew of Aetherius.⁵⁴ The plan was relatively straightforward. Marcellus and Ablabius would wait one evening until Justinian had finished dining in the imperial triclinium, then calmly enter and stab him to death. Marcellus had others tipped off to fabricate a commotion designed to cover the inevitably noisy crime. Exactly where these men were stationed is unclear, but for their mission to be effective, they must have been inside the palace itself. The text of Malalas, preserved as a verbatim excerpt from his work in a later collection on revolts, says the

following about their location: “at the Arma, the office of the Silentarius, the Indoi and the Archangelos.”⁵⁵ Each of these would appear to be spaces inside the palace, in which case the “Archangelon” would be the small chapel of Archangel Michael that Justinian had restored earlier.⁵⁶ For the plot to work, it presupposed both that Ablabius and Marcellus had easy access to the imperial dining room and that key palace guards, and possibly other household officials, were prepared to enter into such a plot to assassinate their long-serving emperor. To explain how events would unfold, the assassin Ablabius took into his confidence not only John, a financier for Domentziolus, but also Eusebius, the *comes foederatorum*, or head of the foreign military contingents that formed part of the emperor’s army.⁵⁷ The atmosphere inside the palace must have been tense and divisive at this point for such a scenario to even be contemplated, let alone shared with one of Justinian’s senior military officials. Ablabius must have had reason to trust the confidence of Eusebius, or else he was informing on his coconspirators in order to secure his own safety as well as that of Justinian. Eusebius, as *comes foederatorum*, was one of those ultimately responsible for preserving the emperor’s safety. Indeed, on taking office he would have sworn an oath by the Virgin and the Archangel

52 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6055 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:237, lines 6–7; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 349). It was a consequence of these accumulated events that Justinian, followed later by Justin II as emperor, refashioned the harbor of Julian as the harbor of Sophia and relocated there many of the vulnerable warehouses previously on the Neorion harbor, opposite Sykai: *Parastaseis* 72 (T. Preger, ed., *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum* [Leipzig, 1907], 1:67); *Patria of Constantinople* 2.68 (Preger, *Scriptores*, 2:188); Magdalino, “Maritime Neighborhoods,” 212–19; and P. Magdalino, “Medieval Constantinople,” in P. Magdalino, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), 21.

53 For the narrative of the plot, see Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141, including *Excerpta de insidiis*, 173.30–175.18 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 425–29; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 310–13).

54 Aetherius: *PLRE* 3:21–22 (“Aetherius 2”); Ablabius: *PLRE* 3:2–3 (“Ablabius 1”), with a discussion of whether or not *μελιστής* means “mint official”; Isaac: *PLRE* 3:719 (“Isaacus 4”); Marcellus: *PLRE* 3:816 (“Marcellus 4”); and Sergius: *PLRE* 3:1128 (“Sergius 6”).

55 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 426*9–10; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 301): εἰς τε τὸ Ἄρμα καὶ εἰς τὸ Σιλεντιαρίκιν καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς καὶ κατὰ τὸν Ἀρχάγγελον. The precise meaning of κατὰ τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς is unclear, although it appears to be that part of the palace where the patricians robed for the installation of a new magistrate who ventured there on appointment (Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies* 1.46 [Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenitos*, 234]). Assuming that the tenth-century *de insidiis* extract from the imperial palace copy of Malalas accurately reflects the original text, Theophanes may have had difficulty making sense of Malalas at this point. Although he regularly recast the words and syntax of Malalas to make better sense or coherence for his own purposes, especially in the latter section of Malalas’s chronicle (Jeffreys, “Transmission,” 258), here he wrote, “Indians hidden in the office of the *silentarius* and in the Archangel and in Arma,” as translated by Mango and Scott (*Chronicle of Theophanes*, 349), as if they were all “Indians” lying in wait in various parts of the palace.

56 This was the chapel of Michael inside the palace where in 536 bishops were sent to search for Anthimus, who had failed to appear at the current council of bishops: *ACO* 3:80 (159.16), 82 (160.2), 113 (175.25).

57 John: *PLRE* 3:672–74 (“Ioannes 81”), and Eusebius: *PLRE* 3:468 (“Eusebius 4”).

Michael to do precisely that.⁵⁸ So he did, but without tipping off the plotters about his double-dealing.

On the agreed day, Saturday, 25 November 562, the conspirators assembled and entered the palace, but the guards were waiting to pick them off. Marcellus was intercepted carrying a dagger, Ablabius a sword. Marcellus turned his dagger on himself then and there. Ablabius was deprived of his sword but lived to fight another day. The other plotter, Sergius, who was evidently not required inside the palace, fled to the Church of the Virgin at Blachernae. Later he was extracted from the church and questioned under torture, thereby implicating three more officials from the household of Justinian's former general Belisarius: Isaac, his financier who had actually lent Marcellus the requisite money to pay off Ablabius, another of Belisarius's financiers named Vitus, and one of his paymasters, Paulus.⁵⁹ All the surviving conspirators were then interrogated on behalf of the emperor by the new city prefect, Procopius, who was assisted by the *quaestor* Constantine, along with two of the imperial secretaries, Julian and Zenodorus, who recorded the conspirators' statements and joined in their interrogation.⁶⁰ As the inquiries advanced, yet other names emerged of individuals who had already fled the city. The conspiracy to murder Justinian proved very extensive. Had Eusebius not decided to defend Justinian by foiling the plot, it would certainly have resulted in the emperor's murder in 562. For the contemporary John Malalas, it was only "through God's good grace" (τοῦ θεοῦ οὕτως εὐδοκήσαντος) that the plot was discovered and Justinian spared.⁶¹

Above all, the plot to liquidate Justinian would have been incomplete without some clear sense, if not formal agreement, on who would immediately replace him on the throne. Yet no names appear to have emerged, although the likely candidates would have been canvassed in private conversations among the plotters. Their choice may have been Justin, the son of

Germanus.⁶² Exactly what triggered the plot, whether it was an outgrowth of the increasing urban violence and opposition to Justinian in 561/562 or some sort of organized disenchantment among the aristocracy, including the veteran Belisarius, is unclear. Often these events have been labeled the "bankers' revolt" because so many of the silversmiths or financial officials (*argyroprantes*) of different wealthy individuals were involved and because money had to be borrowed to bribe the chief conspirators.⁶³ Yet this characterization appears to be misplaced. Not only has the empire's financial situation in these years, and Justinian's capacity to engage with it, been exaggerated, but the individuals involved were not so much "bankers" as the financial officials of wealthy estate holders and managers. Along with merchants and other guilds, they had a ceremonial function in that they formed a separate welcoming group for greeting returning emperors, as in 559 for Justinian.⁶⁴ They were not senior figures themselves, just employed by those who were (Aetherius, Belisarius, Domentziolus).⁶⁵ Never mentioned at all is Justinian's right-hand man, his nephew Justin, as *curopalates*. Although Justin could number several of the conspirators among his associates,⁶⁶ his primary task was to defend the emperor, not threaten him.

In any event, investigations were carried out over the next two weeks, and on 5 December 562, Justinian formally summoned all imperial officeholders

62 This has been suggested by Whitby, *Wars*, 299 (cf. S. Lin, "Justin under Justinian: The Rise of Emperor Justin II Revisited," *DOP* 75 [2021]: 140).

63 W. Brandes, "Eine Verschwörung gegen Justinian im Jahre 562 und Johannes Malalas," in *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas: Quellenfragen*, ed. L. Carrara, M. Meier, and C. Radtki-Jansen (Stuttgart, 2017), 357–92; Michael Whitby, "Armies and Society in the Later Roman World," in *CAH*, vol. 14, *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, A.D. 425–600*, ed. Averil Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge, 2000), 475; and Whitby, *Wars*, 298. There may or may not be a connection between the *argyroprantes* being compelled by Justinian a few months earlier to put on a great light show of some sort (Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.137 [Thurn, *Chronographia*, 424.16–19; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 301]). Here they were in their role as a professional guild group.

64 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix (J. Reiske, ed., *Constantini Porphyrogeniti Imperatoris de ceremoniis aulae byzantinae: Libri duo*, CSHB 16 [Bonn, 1829], 498; Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenitos*, 498).

65 M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 330–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 243.

66 Lin, "Justin under Justinian," 128, 158–59.

58 Justinian, *Novellae* 8 (*CIC Nov* 89–91; Miller and Sarris, *Novels of Justinian*, 154–55), and Wuk, "Constructing Christian Bureaucrats."

59 *PLRE* 3:1387 ("Vitus"), 979 ("Paulus 18").

60 Procopius: *PLRE* 3:1066 ("Procopius 3"); Constantine: *PLRE* 3:342–43 ("Constantinus 4"); Julian: *PLRE* 3:735–36 ("Iulianus 15"); and Zenodorus: *PLRE* 3:1419 ("Zenodorus").

61 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 426.42–43; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 302).

and senators, plus guardsmen and the new patriarch Eutychius, to attend an official hearing (*silentium et conventum*), probably in the imperial audience hall known as the *Magnaaura*.⁶⁷ What the emperor wanted to reveal publicly, doubtless as a lesson to others and to flush out any waverers, was the detail of the recent plot against his life. There were verbatim depositions that had been taken from each of the captured conspirators. The emperor called for the detailed depositions to be read aloud, in turn: those of Sergius, Eusebius, then Belisarius's men, Vitus, and Paulus. As the courtiers and senators listened progressively and cumulatively to the graphic details of the plot, and how it was foiled, two particular reactions arose: anger at Belisarius for letting members of his staff get involved, plus suspicion of Constantine and Julian, who, although they were among the emperor's chief interrogators, were known to be associates of Aetherius. If not himself the instigator of the plot, it was clear that Aetherius knew about it in advance, probably from his own associate Marcellus and/or his nephew Sergius. Yet he seems to have managed to avoid implication or punishment, just as he had in 560 when he was accused of plotting to replace Justinian. There is no mention of Ablabius either. Perhaps a pardon was his reward for turning informer and helping subvert the plot.

What Justinian had intended, so it would appear, was to bring this whole messy situation to a clear resolution. Two outcomes therefore emerged from the emperor's briefing. Firstly, Belisarius was totally discredited. Justinian stripped him of all his staff, not just the conspirators administering his property and household wealth, and of imperial emoluments. The venerable former general was in no position to protest, gave up all his accused staff, and remained the subject of imperial anger. Rather than exile or other punishment, he was confined to his house. Secondly, as for the apparent leniency of Constantine and Julian toward the

suspicious Aetherius, a fresh investigation was ordered to be undertaken by the comes excubitorum Marinus and the general Constantianus. This took place on 11 December 562 and exonerated Constantine and Julian of any knowledge of the plot.

The imperial church of Hagia Sophia, closed for the past four years for repairs since its dome had partly fallen in, was about to be reopened with great fanfare. At the opening three weeks later, the plot's suppression, and the realization that Justinian had been fortunate to escape with his life and throne intact, was reinforced by Paul the Silentiary's panegyric of Justinian. Paul was addressing much of the same audience the emperor himself had recently addressed just days before. Having canvassed the emperor's virtues and good fortune, Paul turned to the recent conspiracy:

The ambush was laid, the sword was at the ready, the appointed day had come. The conspirators had already passed into the palace and were grasping the inner door. Next, they intended to dash against your throne. But you realised this and had known long since. So you remained steadfast and had faith in Him alone who is your champion—I mean God—through whom you are victorious in all things. And you did not fail in your objective. For what followed? The leader of the ambush [Marcellus] fell by his own hand.⁶⁸

Justinian would have forgiven him had he lived, according to Paul. Such is the emperor's propensity to mercy.⁶⁹

This narrow escape from a concerted attempt on Justinian's life in 562 was attributed by Paul to the emperor's faith in God (τῷ σου προσπιζοντι τὸν θεὸν λέγω) and a few years later, as noted above, by Malalas

67 For details of the tribunal hearing, see Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 428–29; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 303). The contemporary Malalas says that the briefing took place in the triclinium (John Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141 [Thurn, *Chronographia*, 428.66 (cf. 428* 41)]). If he means the imperial dining room, the space may have been too small to accommodate the number of those invited. Rather, it was probably held in the Magnaura, which is sometimes called the “large triclinium” (e.g., Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Caeremoniis* 2.15 [Reiske, *De caerimoniis*, 566]: ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ τρικλίνῳ).

68 Paulus Silentarius, *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae*, 24–29 (C. de Stefani, ed., *Paulus Silentarius: Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae; Descriptio Ambonis* [Berlin, 2011], 2; P. N. Bell, trans., *Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian: Agapetus, Advice to the Emperor; Dialogue on Political Science; Paul the Silentiary, Description of Hagia Sophia* [Liverpool, 2009], 190), and Mary Whitby, “The Occasion of Paul the Silentiary's *Ekphrasis* of S. Sophia,” *CQ* 35.1 (1985): 220–22.

69 On this basis, it might be assumed that Ablabius (*PLRE* 3:3 [“Ablabius 1”]) was pardoned by Justinian, but there is no such evidence. More likely he was exiled, as was Sergius (*PLRE* 3:1128 [“Sergius 6”]). For this example of Justinian's mercy, see Parnell, “Justinian's Clemency,” 19–20.

to “God’s good grace” (τοῦ θεοῦ οὕτως εὐδοκήσαντος).⁷⁰ Agathias may also have had the 562 plot in mind if lauding Justinian for “shattering the hopes of disturbers,” both domestic and external (ὁππότε καὶ ξείνοιο καὶ ἐνδαπίοιο κυδοιμοῦ / ἐλπίδες ἐθραύσθησαν ὑφ’ ἡμετέρῳ βασιλῇ).⁷¹ Divine intervention was evidently Justinian’s own explanation. Further, it was arguably the stimulus for his vow to the imperial protector Archangel Michael. Meanwhile, tensions between Blues and Greens continued to simmer and erupted violently once more in April 563 when the city prefect Procopius, who had played a key role in exposing the plotters against Justinian in November 562, was dismissed.⁷²

The point of setting out in detail these events in 561 and 562 has been to illuminate the increasingly frightening position in which Justinian found himself, thereby leading him to offer a vow to Archangel Michael in exchange for his protection. Indeed, after this latest crackdown on the serious factional violence racking the city in May 563, Justinian must have wondered when it would ever stop. By now, however, it is likely that plans were already being formulated for the expedition to Germia in fulfillment of the emperor’s “vow.” Given the uncertain and violent circumstances that emerged in 562 and early 563, and that impacted Justinian and his safety so directly, it is very plausible that he entrusted the archistrategos Michael with his survival. Having done so, he felt obliged to fulfill the promise he had made to visit the Michael shrine at Germia to give thanks for his deliverance from recent threats and plots, especially the dangerous personal threat in November 562. The Archangel Michael had

fulfilled his role of protecting the emperor’s hold on imperial power. The emperor’s response was to acknowledge this intervention publicly, even if it meant preparing to undertake the longest journey of his already long reign. He was also taking the risk of leaving the capital without its emperor for an extended period at a time when his sovereignty was far from secure, and the inevitable succession no less certain, but it was an opportunity for Justin.⁷³ All this is not to say that the benefit of the healing waters of Germia, as well as the spiritual value of honoring Michael in the church that he and Theodora had earlier expanded, did not cross his mind. They were to constitute a spiritual and bodily bonus, rather than the primary motivation for the expedition.

Justinian’s Expedition to Germia, October 563

Irrespective of the vow’s occasion, Justinian clearly felt the arduous travel involved to Germia and back could not be ignored, let alone excused, by an aging body. It would have been shortly after the subsidence of the faction riots in April 563, if not actually before them, that preparations commenced for the imperial expedition to the shrine of Michael the Archangel and its sacred waters at Germia, where Justinian and Theodora had earlier (mid-540s) contributed to the renovation and expansion of the already existing fifth-century church.⁷⁴ Such an imperial expedition was never a spontaneous venture, not least because the emperor needed to be confident about the security of Constantinople in his absence. Even for a journey such as Justinian’s to Germia, the planning needed to be comprehensive and meticulous, especially since no emperor in living memory had ever traveled as far as Justinian was now planning, nor left the capital without its emperor for so long. There was no recent precedent for preparing the supplies and transport logistics for such a journey. Emperors never ventured along the *cursus publicus* into Anatolia, at least not since Arcadius (r. 383–408) and his son Theodosius II (r. 401–450) over a century earlier.⁷⁵ At around six hundred kilometers over land and sea, it was the furthest Justinian had ever traveled from

70 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.141 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 426.42–43; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 302).

71 *Anthologia Palatina* 4.3, line 99 (preface to the *Cycle*), and B. Baldwin, “Four Problems in Agathias,” *BZ* 70.2 (1977): 301. Whether this preface of Agathias was intended for Justinian or his successor Justin II is disputed. The case for Justin has been made by Averil Cameron and Alan Cameron, “The Cycle of Agathias,” *JHS* 86 (1966): 6–25, but challenged by Baldwin, “Four Problems,” 298–301, and B. Baldwin, “The Date of the Cycle of Agathias,” *BZ* 73.2 (1980): 334–40, then reiterated by Averil Cameron, “The Career of Corippus Again,” *CQ*, n.s., 30.2 (1980): 537 (repr. in Cameron, *Continuity and Change*).

72 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6055 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:239.6–17; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 350–51), taken from Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.146 (Thurn, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:430; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 304).

73 Lin, “Justin under Justinian,” 140.

74 Niewöhner and Rheidt, “Michaelskirche,” 143, 151, and Niewöhner et al., “Bronze Age Höyüks,” 98.

75 Arcadius spent some of the summer months of 397, 398, 399, and 405 in Ankara (C. Foss, “Late Antique and Byzantine Ankara,” *DOP*

the imperial capital in his entire reign, and he was now in his eighties. Certainly, it could have been a short, sharp journey (by horseback, litter, or carriage, or some combination) with minimal entourage and minimal local involvement. However, given Justinian's age and status, a less hurried journey is more likely. However extraordinary the expedition was, it had to begin with careful planning, just like any imperial expedition at any previous time.

Some idea of the precise planning required can be gleaned from a later Byzantine imperial guide, firstly ensuring up-to-date familiarity with the route and its safety, its towns, forts, and topography. Then there was the costing, as well as the most complex preparations of all, involving the packing of provisions and equipment, including necessary books and manuals, on the carefully calculated number of pack animals and other horses.⁷⁶ When the emperor Constantine proposed setting out on an expedition in the early fourth century, the first steps were to: (1) take advice on the best time to travel and the best route to follow; (2) know what places were along the way and how well provisioned they were in terms of food, water, and security; and (3) compile a list of the successive places along the route, how far apart they were, and how many people each could accommodate. Having decided on the timing of the journey, the emperor left to others the details of the costs and logistics.⁷⁷ The same could be expected for Justinian in 563.

The immediate decision for the journey to Germia, therefore, would have been to choose the most advantageous time of the year weather-wise both for the emperor and for the requirements of such an expedition. Clearly, the summer months in Galatia were too hot and the winter months, broadly speaking, too wet

and cold, with a threat of snow in places. Germia is subject to extremely cold temperatures and heavy snowfalls. Rain could be highly problematic too, even on the well-drained imperial roadways.⁷⁸ Spring and autumn presented the safest weather options. In Ankara, for example, the average daytime temperature in October is 20.5 degrees Celsius, and the average rainfall is six days per month. Notwithstanding ongoing unrest and violence between the Blues and Greens at Constantinople, the spring of 563 was already too soon for the planned imperial trip to Germia. That left the period from September to November as the optimal time.

Then there was determining the route. The main guide to any itinerary was not a detailed topographic map to scale, but just the list of the stopping and changing posts and inns along the way with the distances between them, further assisted by periodic milestones. Generally, this information sufficed for a Roman traveler to know where he was and how far he was from the next source of rest and replenishment.⁷⁹ Above all, an imperial itinerary is likely to have followed the route of the public communication and transport system—the *cursus publicus*. Moreover, the towns along the way, which were to provide the fit and fed animals and vehicles for transport from one place to the next, needed to know when their service would be required by the emperor and his party. Justinian and his officials would have sent the requisite advice ahead by imperial courier, not unlike the process outlined by the emperor Severus Alexander in the third century. Two months before the imperial journey, the emperor Severus published an edict outlining his travel plans. His edict specified “on that day, at that hour, I shall go forth from the city and, if the gods allow it, I will stay in the first station, detailing then the stations one after another, then the camps, and then where the provisions are to be had,” all the way to his destination.⁸⁰ Again, Justinian is likely to have done something similar around August 563. The places through which the emperor himself would be passing through, or staying at overnight, needed

31 [1977]: 50–51), while his son Theodosius II had once traveled as far as Aphrodisias (Theodosius II, *Novellae* 23).

76 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix 1 (Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos*, 455–97). Roman emperors had always been subject to thorough planning for any imperial journey: F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC–AD 337)* (London, 1977), 28–40, and H. Halfmann, *Itinera principum: Geschichte und Typologie der Kaiserreisen im Römischen Reich* (Stuttgart, 1986).

77 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix 1 (Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos*, 445–54). The precise implications of such a journey are detailed in Hendy, *Studies*, 304–15.

78 K. Belke, “Prokops *De Aedificiis*, Buch V, zu Kleinasien,” *AntTard* 8 (2000): 122.

79 K. Brodersen, “The Presentation of Geographical Knowledge for Travel and Transport in the Roman World: Itineraria non tantum adnotata sed etiam picta,” in *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire*, ed. C. Adams and R. Laurence (London, 2001), 7–21.

80 *Hist. Aug. Alex. Sev.* 45.2–3.

to know in advance and ensure that adequate accommodation and provisions were available. To judge from the preparations made for the announced stay of the emperor Diocletian at Egyptian Panopolis in September 298, planning needed to cover not only suitable accommodation for the emperor but also the supply of meat, bread, wine, and vegetables for his sizable military escort.⁸¹

Over recent decades as emperor, Justinian had often spent time immersed in plans and approving projects to modify and upgrade the roads and bridges of Asia Minor and other parts of the empire, with a view to creating a more efficient and reliable transport system for imperial purposes.⁸² Procopius's *Buildings*, completed before Justinian's journey to Germia even at the latest possible date for its composition (c. 560), is rich testimony to this program. Underlying the emperor's clear and systematic approach was the quest to make the highways faster and safer for the imperial officials and especially the army as it ventured back and forth between Constantinople and the eastern frontier regions of Armenia and Mesopotamia. In reality, the Justinianic road system with its strong bridges served the needs of the court and imperial business for the ensuing millennium.⁸³ For the first and only time for Justinian, the emperor would now benefit himself from all these improvements in roads and bridges.

Sometime by October 563, with all due preparations in place, Justinian and his entourage started out from Constantinople, probably from the Harbor of Julian. Their nearest imperial abodes and safe harbors were directly across the Bosphorus. Chalcedon was a regular starting point for pilgrims setting out across Asia Minor to Palestine, as well as imperial administrative

and military officials on business.⁸⁴ Hieria on the Fenerbahçe peninsula had been extensively rebuilt by Justinian as a favorite place of his wife, Theodora. It was now the major harbor for emperors and imperial expeditions such as Justinian's to Germia in 563.⁸⁵ It is likely therefore that the emperor and his party spent the first night of their journey at Hieria. Otherwise, they might have put in further along the Asian coast at Rufinianai (modern Caddebostan), where there was an imperial palace, though not a large harbor.

Whether direct from Constantinople, or from the palace at Hieria, the long and complex travel train of people and imperial accoutrements was ferried across the Sea of Marmara, before inching its way overland to Ankara. The imperial boats and barges that occasionally transported the emperor on short journeys around the perimeter of the imperial city, or up the Bosphorus to a summer palace, were now to take Justinian away from the neighborhood of Constantinople with great flourish. Precisely where they docked to commence the overland journey can only be guessed. Perhaps it was at Pylai (modern Yalova), where, thirty years before, the empress Theodora had been accompanied by an entourage of four thousand officials when she visited the hot springs at nearby Pythia.⁸⁶ The emperor Justinian's party in 563 may not have been as large but could still have numbered in the hundreds. At Pythia there was actually a new palace, baths, and aqueduct, plus a shrine of the Archangel Michael built or renovated by Justinian and Theodora in the 530s or 540s.⁸⁷ It may have been considered worth a detour if the imperial party landed elsewhere. Later Byzantine emperors, generally more mobile than Justinian had ever been, tended to make their Asian landfall at Pylai.⁸⁸

81 T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin* (Dublin, 1964), 1–55, with reference to *Panop. Beatty* 1.

82 A. Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im römischen Reich* (Berlin, 2000), 223–25.

83 W. M. Ramsay, *The Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890), 78–79 (stressing the important role of Justinian), and K. Belke, "Transport and Communication," in *The Archaeology of Byzantine Anatolia: From the End of Late Antiquity until the Coming of the Turks*, ed. P. Niewöhner (Oxford, 2017), 28–38. Much can be relevantly applied to Justinian's trip through Bithynia and Galatia to Germia from J. Haldon, "Roads and Communications in the Byzantine Empire: Wagons, Horses, and Supplies," in *Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades*, ed. J. H. Pryor (Aldershot, 2006), 131–58.

84 K. Belke, "Tore nach Kleinasien: Die Konstantinopel gegenüberliegenden Häfen Chalkedon, Chrysopolis, Hiëria und Eutropiu Limen," in *Die byzantinischen Häfen Konstantinopels*, ed. F. Daim (Mainz, 2016), 162–65.

85 Procopius, *Buildings* 1.11.18–21, and Belke, "Tore nach Kleinasien," 167–79.

86 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.25 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 368; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 256).

87 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.3.16–20.

88 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix 1 (Reiske, *De Ceremoniis*, 474; Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenetos*, 474), and C. Mango, "The Empress Helena, Helenopolis, Pylae," *TM* 12 (1994): 155–58.

More likely as a landing point for Justinian and his entourage, however, was Helenopolis (modern Hersek), twenty kilometers east of Yalova, which was so silted up in later times that imperial expeditions could never use it. Helenopolis would have enabled the imperial fleet to sail close to the Asian coast before effecting a short crossing inside the Gulf of Nicomedia. Justinian had already turned the town into a major port and juncture for travel to and from Constantinople.⁸⁹ Indeed, in an invective mood, Procopius could castigate Justinian for neglecting the road links to Nicomedia by preferring the sea route from the city.⁹⁰ Now Justinian could see firsthand the new aqueduct that had secured the water supply of Helenopolis, as well as the baths and other facilities already built under his auspices. The town now had a palace as well, and Justinian would be the first emperor ever to stay there.⁹¹ Certainly, it provided an appropriate venue to rest and stock up before the long inland part of the journey to Germia. From Helenopolis, the imperial party would have traveled to Nicaea, crossing over the new bridges that had mitigated the regular danger from the rushing Draco River⁹² and arriving in the city through the still-preserved Istanbul Gate. At Nicaea, Justinian could see the aqueduct that had been rebuilt in recent years and traces of which still survive, as well as the churches and monasteries the emperor had built and the restored baths used by imperial couriers. The emperor and his party would have been accommodated at Nicaea's renovated palace.⁹³

From Nicaea, there were basically two ways of reaching as far as Germia. Certainty is not attainable, but there is value in tracing the likely route taken by Justinian's expedition. The first and most direct route involved tracking south of Nicaea across to Dorylaeum (modern Eskişehir), then on to the road leading to Germa/Germakoloneia, and from there toward the Dindymon mountains through Eudoxias to Germia. This would involve reaching Dorylaeum

from Nicaea either by the road through modern Bilecik and Bozüyük, or that through modern İnegöl and Pazaryeri.⁹⁴ In either case, although shorter, this would be the more topographically difficult route, with steep river valleys, and the less comfortable route for Justinian and his party because they would be traveling partly on inferior roads for a considerable part of the way. The second, less direct route was to travel east of Nicaea to Ankara, using the familiar "Pilgrim's Route" and finally down to Germakoloneia (near modern Babadat), then across to Germia (Fig. 1).⁹⁵ As a young soldier, Justinian may have traveled along the road to Ankara on his way further east with a Roman army contingent. However, he had not done so for half a century or more, certainly not since he became emperor and initiated various improvements to the road and its bridges.⁹⁶ Whether he insisted or not, this route was certainly more comfortable and manageable for the emperor, a better road with better facilities along the way. It was the highway that routinely saw imperial officials, both civilian and military, dignitaries and merchants, sometimes bishops and clergy, traveling on the public communications and transport system (*cursus publicus*) with its regular staging posts for changing horses (*mutationes*) and well-stocked inns for resting overnight (*mansiones*).⁹⁷ For these reasons, it is the more likely route for Justinian's journey to Germia. Hence, it is the route presumed here and followed in some detail, especially as it helps

94 K. Belke, *Galatien und Lykaonien*, TIB 4 (Vienna, 1984), 105–6, and Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*," 122.

95 Calculated from data available at *Orbis* (orbis.stanford.edu). The known itineraries do not include Germia but do provide for nearby Germa/Germakoloneia where the road from Ankara crosses with that from Dorylaeum. Travelers to Germia would have diverted there for Eudoxias, then Germia. For the location, see Belke, *Galatien*, 166–68, 247, and R. J. A. Talbert et al., eds., *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton, 2000), map 62 (G3). Although it remains a trap for the unwary, the clear distinction between Germa/Germakoloneia and Germia was cleared up by M. Waelkens, "Germa, Germakoloneia et Germia," *Byzantion* 49 (1979): 447–64.

96 It has been proposed in C. Koehn, "Justinian στρατηγός," in *Le monde de Procope/The World of Procopius*, ed. G. Greatrex and S. Janniard (Paris, 2018), 222–24, and C. Koehn, *Justinian und die Armee des frühen Byzanz* (Berlin, 2018), 63–64, that Justinian might also have traveled this road as *Caesar* and *magister militum* in 525/526 on his way to supervise military operations in Armenia, but the argument is highly speculative.

97 Belke, "Transport and Communication," 28–38.

89 Ramsay, *Historical Geography*, 187–88, and Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*," 118.

90 Procopius, *Secret History* 30.8–9.

91 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.2.1–5.

92 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.2.6–13, and J. Lefort, "Les communications entre Constantinople et la Bithynie," in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron (Aldershot, 1995), 212–15.

93 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.3.1–3.

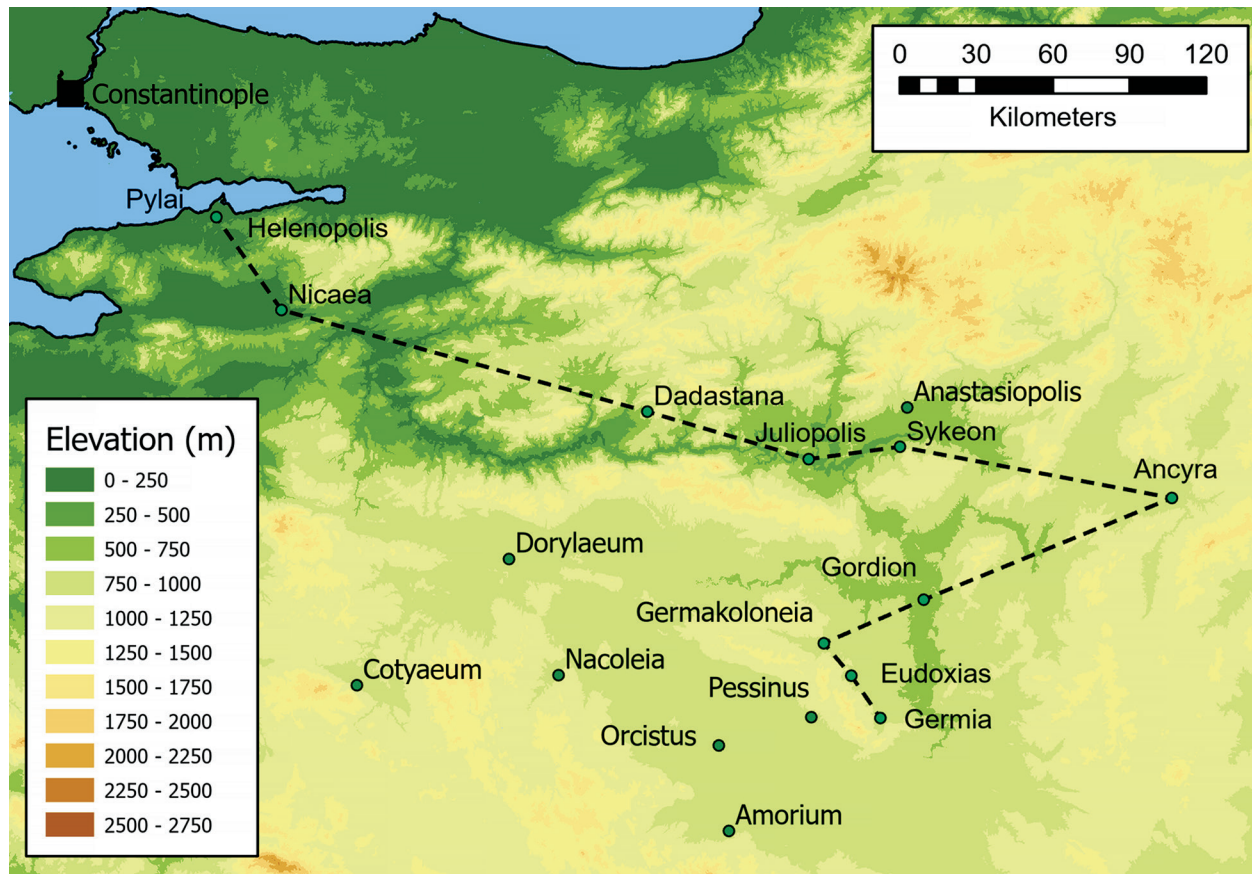


Fig. 1. Justinian's route from Constantinople to Germia. Map by Hugh Elton.

illuminate the relevance to Justinian of various points along the way.

The overland journey would have taken a minimum of around seventeen to eighteen days of traveling time, with the emperor presumably riding on horseback, perhaps even in a carriage or litter for part of the way. He would have been accompanied along the way by local dignitaries as well as his own permanent escort and rested overnight at imperial villas and specially prepared staging posts. Moreover, his route took in some of the most important cities of the East, such as Nicaea and Ankara, as well as Juliopolis and Germakoloneia. At all these places, Justinian would have been formally welcomed and feted. No city along the route had experienced a ceremonial imperial arrival (*adventus*) or departure (*profectio*) in living memory. Welcoming and hosting the emperor and his party was a momentous occasion locally, both for the hosts and for the local

aristocracy now given resident access to power.⁹⁸ Even for the traveling Justinian, imperial business constantly required attention. It was only to be expected that local towns and local aristocracies would take advantage of the emperor's presence and expect him to demonstrate his authority accordingly, just as Theodosius II was obliged to do at Heraclea in 443.⁹⁹ The civic and imperial officials would never have imagined they would have the opportunity to entertain the Roman emperor in their own town, and certainly not in his eighties. Since 527, they had known the emperor from his coins, and from the gold coins (solidi), they were familiar with the intimate connection of victory between Justinian

98 Millar, *Emperor*, 28–40, 640. In fact, the “the emperor functioned as a sort of moving capital of the empire in himself” (Millar, *Emperor*, 39).

99 Millar, *Emperor*, 38.

and Archangel Michael, which they would have easily taken to be the angel on the solidus reverse. So it would hardly surprise them to discover that the destination of Justinian's unexpected journey was to a place such as Germia that was firmly associated with Michael.

Normally, it would take ten days to cover the distance between Nicaea and Ankara, the longest stretch of the emperor's journey. According to the available itineraries, it involved a total of twelve stopovers (*mansiones*) with several intermediate stops to rest and change horses. This rate of slightly more than one *mansio* per day may not have applied to the emperor and his entourage, who would also have been carrying comfortable tents for their accommodation. When setting up tents inside a fortified camp, the emperor's space was protected by armed guards. Admittance beyond them required the current day's password, which could be "Archangel Michael."¹⁰⁰ The emperor's party might be expected to have covered one *mansio* per day, every day, thereby taking twelve days of traveling time between Nicaea and Ankara.

As already noted, anyone planning a journey from Nicaea to Ankara in the sixth century would have consulted and kept handy a list of the stopping points and cities along the route, together with the distance between each point readily recorded from Roman milestones. Several such lists are extant, including the earliest, known as the *Itinerarium Antonini*, followed by the later *itineraria* that formed part of an overall pilgrim journey to the Holy Land. Such a list may also have been used as the basis for publishing an advance outline of the proposed imperial journey in 563, if Justinian followed the imperial precedent illustrated by Severus Alexander and Constantine. For this section of the route, the itinerary of the fourth-century Bordeaux pilgrim runs as follows, with Roman miles expressed in closest approximate kilometers:¹⁰¹

From Nicaea to the change (*mutatio*) at Schine, eight miles (11.9 kilometers)
 To the stopping place (*mansio*) at Midus (Moedos), seven miles (10.4 kilometers)
 To the change at Chogea, six miles (8.9 kilometers)
 To the change at Thatesus, ten miles (14.8 kilometers)
 To the stop at Tutadus (Tottaion), nine miles (13.4 kilometers)
 To the change at Protoniaca, eleven miles (16.3 kilometers)
 To the change at Artemis, twelve miles (17.8 kilometers)
 To the stop at Dableis, six miles (8.9 kilometers)
 To the stop at Ceratae, six miles (8.9 kilometers), actually ten miles (14.8 kilometers)¹⁰²
 To the change at Fines (Bithynia/Galatia provincial boundary), ten miles (14.8 kilometers)
 To the stop at Dadastana, six miles (8.9 kilometers), actually eleven miles (16.3 kilometers)¹⁰³
 To the change at Transmonte, six miles (8.9 kilometers), actually eleven miles (16.3 kilometers)¹⁰⁴
 To the change at Milia, eleven miles (16.3 kilometers)
 To the stop at Juliopolis, eight miles (11.9 kilometers)
 To the change at Hieronpotamon (Hieros/Siberis River), thirteen miles (19.3 kilometers)
 To the stop at Lagania (Anastasiopolis), eleven miles (16.3 kilometers)
 To the change at Petrobrogen, six miles (8.9 kilometers)
 To the stop at Mnizos, ten miles (14.8 kilometers)
 To the change at Prasmon, twelve miles (17.8 kilometers), actually seven miles (10.4 kilometers)¹⁰⁵

100 Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix (Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogenitos*, 481). Other possible passwords were "the Savior" or the "Theotokos."

101 The route is traced through the comparative analysis of the *Itinerarium Antonini*, the Bordeaux Pilgrim, and the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, as set out (with their modern place-names where known) in D. H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, vol. 4, *The Roads*, fasc. 1, *Notes on the Itineraria* (Ankara, 2016), 21, table 2. See also Belke, *Galatien*, 95–96, 104–5.

102 As corrected by Belke, *Galatien*, 164.

103 As corrected by D. H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, fasc. 1, *The Pilgrim's Road* (Ankara, 1981), 106, table 3 (a), n. 1, and Belke, *Galatien*, 164.

104 As corrected by French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 106, table 3 (a), n. 3, and Belke, *Galatien*, 237.

105 As corrected in Belke, *Galatien*, 207.

To the stop at Manegordo, nine miles
(13.4 kilometers), actually fourteen miles
(20.7 kilometers)¹⁰⁶

To the change at Cenaxis Palus, thirteen miles
(19.3 kilometers), actually six miles
(8.9 kilometers)¹⁰⁷

To the stop at Ankara, thirteen miles
(19.3 kilometers), actually six miles
(8.9 kilometers)¹⁰⁸

This is the route the emperor and his party would have followed between Nicaea and Ankara, but rather than travel as much as twenty-five or twenty-nine miles in a single day, the imperial party may have split these parts of the journey across two days, or sometimes covered two sections in one day. They would have noted the first- to fourth-century milestones of rounded limestone that marked off their journey as they traversed each mile, further and further on from Nicaea, the start of the road (*caput viae*).¹⁰⁹ The milestones generally gave an emperor's name and titlature in Latin while the distance was recorded in both Latin and Greek. Traveling fifteen miles on the first day and stopping at Midus, twenty-five miles on the second day of travel stopping at Tutadus, twenty-nine miles to Dableis, ten miles to Ceratae, then to the Galatian border town of Fines (near modern Ericek), followed by 11 miles to Dadastana then thirty miles to Juliopolis, which marked the end of the road from Nicaea.

Along the way, milestones denoted the progressive distance from Juliopolis all the way to Ankara.¹¹⁰ Earlier, as part of the upgrading of this road that was so significant for the Roman army and administration, not to mention bishops and pilgrims, Justinian had a bridge built over the Skopas River that he now crossed himself.¹¹¹ At Juliopolis, now certainly identified as near modern Çayırhan, thirty-five kilometers east of Nallıhan and 110 kilometers west of Ankara, Justinian

arranged for strengthening of the city walls that were being eroded by the nearby Skopas River (modern Aladağ Çayı).¹¹² At the right time of year, he might have taken part in the all-night vigil at Juliopolis for St. Heuresus.¹¹³ Nowadays, Juliopolis lies below the waters of the artificial Sarıyar Dam, although various inscriptions and architectural remains were retrieved before its submergence.¹¹⁴ From Juliopolis, it was another twenty-four miles to Anastasiopolis (modern Dikmen Höyük). Missing from the fourth-century itinerary between Juliopolis and Anastasiopolis, but part of the route by 563, was Sykeon, only recently established as the modern village of Kiliseler.¹¹⁵ If the emperor planned to stop at Sykeon, as would appear likely, he would have covered thirteen miles that day. From Anastasiopolis, a sixteen-mile journey brought the imperial party, via Petrobrogen, to the overnight stay at Mnizos.¹¹⁶ Twenty-one miles from there they came to the next stop at Manegordo (modern Avdan), via Prasmon, which was twelve miles and at least a day's journey from Ankara.¹¹⁷ The final stopping place before Ankara was Cenaxis Palus (possibly Çakırlar Çiftliği), which was six miles away.¹¹⁸

At Ankara, Justinian could be reminded of provincial reforms over recent decades that influenced the city as a provincial capital.¹¹⁹ From Ankara, the imperial party would have taken the road in a south-westerly direction toward the town of Germa, also called Germakoloneia, which was a reminder that it

106 As corrected by French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 40, fig. 6, n. 8.

107 As corrected in Belke, *Galatien*, 151.

108 As corrected by French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 40, fig. 6, n. 9.

109 For the extant milestones, see D. H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, vol. 3, *Milestones*, fasc. 3.4, *Pontus et Bithynia* (Ankara, 2013).

110 French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 3.4, 145, no. 93 (two miles); 146, no. 94 (eight miles); 144, no. 92 (nine miles).

111 Procopius, *Buildings* 5.4.1–4.

112 F. Onur, "Epigraphic Research around Juliopolis I: A Historical and Geographical Overview," *Gephyra* 11 (2014): 69.

113 *Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 13 (cf. Onur, "Epigraphic Research," 70).

114 Belke, *Galatien*, 181–82, with inscriptions conveniently collected in Onur, "Epigraphic Research," 76–78.

115 D. Barchard, "Sykeon Rediscovered? A Site at Kiliseler near Beyparazi," *AnatSt* 53 (2003): 175–79. The best explanation for Sykeon's absence from the fourth-century itinerary is that it was actually the mutatio nearest the crossing of the Hieros/Siberis River, called "Hieronpotamon" in the *Peutinger Table* (and therefore the *Barrington Atlas*). So it was Hieronpotamon where Justinian crossed the bridge built just a few years prior (in 560/1): Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*," 119.

116 Mnizos: French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 110; Belke, *Galatien*, 207; and Petrobrogen: French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 110; Belke, *Galatien*, 215.

117 Manegordo: French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 112; Belke, *Galatien*, 201; and Prasmon: French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 112; Belke, *Galatien*, 216–17.

118 Cenaxis Palus: French, *Roman Roads*, fasc. 1, 112, and Belke, *Galatien*, 151.

119 Foss, "Ankara," 56–58.

was a colony established long ago by Augustus. Here the route is less certain because it was not part of the Pilgrim Route left behind by Justinian when it took an easterly turn from Ankara toward Cappadocia and beyond. Still, the main route can be reconstructed from the available itineraries. Justinian's party would have traveled thirty-two miles from Ankara to Papira (near modern Aliköy),¹²⁰ then twenty-four miles from Papira to Gordion (modern Yassihüyük),¹²¹ and a further twenty miles from Gordion to Germakoloneia (ruins near modern Babadat).¹²² This section may have taken up to five days of travel. It is from Germakoloneia that Justinian and his entourage diverted across to Eudoxias and on to Germia, a final day's journey of seventeen miles (twenty-eight kilometers), although an overnight stay at Eudoxias is not unlikely.¹²³ It was the inhabitants of Eudoxias and nearby Goeleon who walked most frequently to Germia. The total distance covered since Ankara was ninety-three miles (150 kilometers). After about twenty days of hard travel in October 563, the imperial entourage would have arrived at Germia.

The Emperor at Germia

Only recently has Germia been properly surveyed, explored, studied, and documented.¹²⁴ Rather than repurposing the site of a pagan healing shrine, so common in that part of Anatolia, Officials evidently established Germia as a specifically Christian healing shrine

at the nearby thermal springs.¹²⁵ An association with Archangel Michael may date from the fourth century, with the existence of the sacred healing pool at Germia perhaps explained by a miraculous geophysical intervention by the archangel. By Justinian's time, it was a healing shrine of Archangel Michael that drew pilgrims from far and wide, just like the emperor himself. The Michael church, expanded not long before, was now the largest church in central Anatolia.¹²⁶ The original church construction was initiated in the mid-fifth century by a Constantinopolitan aristocrat and consul named John Studius. He was the same person responsible not only for another Michael church, at Phrygian Nakoleia,¹²⁷ but also for the Stoudion church and monastery at Constantinople, which was constructed around the same time, that is, in the middle of the fifth century.¹²⁸ Studius's connection with this faraway Galatian shrine arose from his discovery at Constantinople of the healing properties of the sacred water brought to the capital by a citizen of Goeleon (modern Kayakent), near Germia. Cured of his ailment, Studius then made his own pilgrimage from Constantinople to Germia and arranged to build a church and hospital on the spot of Michael's miracle and its healing waters.¹²⁹ By Justinian's day, Germia and its church were well-known to any devotee of the archangel.

Today, the remains of the Michael church are scattered across no less than ten seemingly disconnected sections, but all are now acknowledged as part of the same large building. The Michael church comprised a two-story narthex, five aisles, a vaulted ceiling, and associated buildings. Research on the building has identified three distinct phases of construction at different periods: (1) an original three-aisled basilica built by Studius around 450, with alternate layers of brick and limestone but with brick arches that denote a Constantinopolitan style; (2) a local construction from the sixth century, turning the north and south walls

120 Belke, *Galatien*, 106.

121 Belke, *Galatien*, 117.

122 Belke, *Galatien*, 168–69. Germia's location was confirmed by Belke, *Galatien*, 166–68. Henri Grégoire had come to a similar conclusion earlier (reported in Honigmann, "Atlas byzantine," 548–53).

123 Eudoxias: Belke, *Galatien*, 163.

124 Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity"; Niewöhner et al., "Bronze Age Höyüks"; Niewöhner, "Germia"; and Niewöhner, "Healing Springs" build on the firsthand appreciation of Germia by Cyril Mango in 1982, resulting in seminal articles and photographs: Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," and C. Mango, "The Pilgrimage Centre of St. Michael at Germia," *JÖB* 36 (1986): 117–32. An evocative glimpse of Mango, pipe in hand, picking the brains of the local men about the remains at Gümüşkonak (Germia) in 1982, forms the frontispiece to I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter, *Ἀετός: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart, 1998), just as later researchers discovered the locals were crucial sources of information for Germia and its surrounding district (Niewöhner et al., "Bronze Age Höyüks," 98–99). A striking reminder of the value of such local knowledge, even today, is the search for Sykeon (Barchard, "Sykeon Rediscovered?").

125 Even so, it has been suggested that Michael took over responsibility for healing, formerly attributed to the local god Mēn (Niewöhner, "Healing Springs," 122–24).

126 Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 48.

127 Niewöhner and Rheidt, "Michaelskirche," 135.

128 C. Mango, "The Date of the Studius Basilica at Istanbul," *BMGS* 4.1 (1978): 115–22.

129 For details, see Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," 51–59.

into arcaded aisles, probably by way of repair following serious damage but changing the character of the building to make it more Anatolian in design; and (3) a significant post-Justinianic enlargement and the creation of a dome to make it a fully cross-in-dome layout, perhaps coincident with the establishment of Germia as an autocephalous archbishopric in the seventh century.¹³⁰ It is the second of these phases that occurred in the time of Justinian.

Two decades previously, well before the death of Theodora in 548, Justinian and Theodora had been actively involved in building at Germia. The precise origin of the extant large capital containing their carved monograms is unclear, but it may derive from the rebuilding of this very church in the 530s or 540s, that is, before Theodora's death in 548.¹³¹ What is clear is that there was a new phase of construction at this time, adding extra aisles to presumably accommodate increasing crowds coming to the church. If so, the plans for the church and the monitoring of its construction and opening were dealt with by the emperor in his palace at Constantinople, even though the design and the materials used (both limestone and marble) were local. Theodora's role should not be exaggerated. In the quest to magnify all the foundations to which the empress Theodora can be attached, much is made of the city of Germia being later called "the city of Theodora/the Theodorans" (θεοδωριατῶν . . . πόλις). Yet, it is misleading to claim that this was always an alternative name of

Germia.¹³² Not only does the first use of the name not come before 692 in the subscription of Bishop Moses at the Council in Trullo at Constantinople,¹³³ but it also requires the unlikely emendation of the "Bithynia" (Βιθυνῶν) of all seventy-two manuscripts used for the standard edition of the council's record to "Galatia II" (δευτέρως τῶν Γαλατῶν).¹³⁴ Further, according Theodora priority over her imperial husband in the building of the church 150 years after her death seems unlikely.

The columns and their capitals—in fact, most of the materials from which the church was constructed—were quarried and shaped locally. The surrounding hills provided the limestone and part of the large amount of marble, with the remainder brought in from further away. Apart from the Michael church, there was another domed church at Germia, perhaps dedicated to St. Sergius, but probably built after Justinian's time.¹³⁵ So, too, it was probably long after 563 that the local bishop, Aemilianus, acquired his relics of St. George. Later, he invited Theodore of Sykeon to Germia for the express purpose of acquiring the relics for his church of St. George at Sykeon. First, he prayed with Aemilianus in the Michael church.¹³⁶

Germia was never a major town, but with its Michael church it remained predominantly a pilgrimage

130 Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 50, and Niewöhner et al., "Bronze Age Höyüks," 128–29. This construction was presumably undertaken after what appears to be the only, and temporary, capture of Germia by an Arab military contingent in 668 (Niewöhner, "Germia," 348).

131 What is unclear is whether the extant capital with a monogram of both Justinian and Theodora carved into it came from an expansion program for the Michael church around this time, or some other building altogether: Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," 52; Niewöhner and Rheidt, "Michaelskirche," 143, 151; and Niewöhner et al., "Bronze Age Höyüks," 98. On balance, however, it is more likely than not to have been part of the church: see A. V. Walser, "Germia: Ein anatolischer Pilgerort in byzantinischer Zeit," in *Für Seelenheil und Lebensglück: Das byzantinische Pilgerwesen und seine Wurzeln*, ed. D. Arianzi and I. Eichner (Mainz, 2018), 177; Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 48; and I. Garipzanov, *Graphic Signs of Authority in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 300–900* (Oxford, 2018), 184 (in the context of the wider use of the monograms of Justinian and Theodora, and of Justinian alone, at Constantinople and elsewhere).

132 U. Unterweger, "The Image of the Empress Theodora as Patron," *WJKg* 60.1 (2012): 101, and M. Ritter, *Zwischen Glaube und Geld: Zur Ökonomie des byzantinischen Pilgerwesens (4.–12. Jh.)* (Mainz, 2019), 35.

133 H. Ohme, *Das Concilium Quinisextum und seine Bischofsliste: Studien zum Konstantinopeler Konzil von 692* (Berlin, 1990), 67.14–15, subscription 39.

134 Other than a possible analogy with "the metropolis of Justinianopolis or Mokissos" (Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 66.15–17, subscription 30), the sole reason for this radical emendation seems to be that by 692 the Galatian Germia was an autocephalous bishopric where a monogram of Theodora could be found. This emendation remains problematic because (1) it is the only locational emendation required for the 226 episcopal subscriptions and (2) θεοδωριατῶν may be an epithet (such as "God-given"), rather than necessarily a person's name, but if so, Theodoros, the holy man from Sykeon, has an equal association with Germia as does Theodora. Germia is given the name "Theodorou" by the editor of the subscriptions to the Council in Trullo (Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 116, 117, 126), but "Theodorou" is evidently not otherwise attested for any location in Galatia II, let alone Germia.

135 Niewöhner, "Germia," 346.

136 *Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 100–101. The relics (part of George's skull, a finger, and a tooth) were not necessarily housed in the Michael church at that point. They were evidently the private possession of the local bishop, Aemilianus.

center with no evidence of early decline. It was primarily a place of healing. Other buildings at Germia, including terrace walls, have also been identified, surveyed, and analyzed to some extent in recent times, but their extant remains are generally part of more modern houses and other constructions.¹³⁷ The city also had a palatial residence for the bishop and important guests. No guest could be more important than the emperor. The bishop's palace was probably where Justinian himself stayed.¹³⁸ If Menas was the bishop of Myriangeloï when Justinian visited in 563, then they may both have been renewing an acquaintanceship from the Council of 553 in Constantinople. At that time, the see was a suffragan of the metropolitan at Pessinus, twenty kilometers to the west. In fact, as it turned out, Menas was the only bishop of his province (Galatia II) at the council, although he is only ever referred to as "bishop of Myriangeloï," not as representing the province. The metropolitan bishop of Pessinus was absent either through illness or a vacant see.¹³⁹

Then there was the large pool including the healing fishpond of Michael, but recent research at Germia has found nothing to substantiate Cyril Mango's hypothesis of a prior healing pool of the god Attis there.¹⁴⁰ The pool was the source of the health-restoring water that Studius discovered in Constantinople and that prompted his productive relationship with Germia more than a century before Justinian's visit. It was the reason most people came there. Unlike other nearby Roman settlements, there are no pre-Roman grave-stones and inscriptions at Germia itself.¹⁴¹ Germia may have been a small settlement, but it came to have large

necropoleis. This means that a great number chose to be buried near the shrine of Michael. Honoring the memory of the local dead brought many more pilgrims there.¹⁴² Among the legible grave inscriptions are some for local craftsmen (goldsmith, blacksmith), while another mentions the previously unknown monastery of Constantine.¹⁴³ There were also other monasteries near Germia, and the remains of one have been identified as that of the Virgin Mother of God, or the monastery of Aligete.¹⁴⁴ Inscriptions at Germia itself are rare, but two of them illustrate Michael's attraction, both commemorating imperial government officials who presumably died on pilgrimage in Germia: one was Phokas, a *scriniarius* from Constantinople,¹⁴⁵ the other Soterichus, "having completely devoted himself to the commander in chief" (τῷ ἀρχιστρατήγῳ ἑαυτὸν ὅλον παραδούς), according to his tombstone.¹⁴⁶ On his visit to Germia, Justinian would have been accompanied by many officials of all ranks. Phokas may have been among them, or he may have been a private pilgrim on some other occasion.¹⁴⁷

How long Justinian spent at Germia in October/November 563 is unknown, but we might safely assume a few days, if not longer. He would have attended a divine liturgy in the Michael church. One such celebration was surely that on 8 November 563, which would have been the annual feast day of Archangel Michael at Germia. Justinian was used to celebrating that day at Constantinople, and by 535, it was already an annual feast at Oxyrhynchus.¹⁴⁸ Presumably, the emperor's presence also attracted the citizens of nearby

137 Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 51–52.

138 Niewöhner, "Germia," 345.

139 Details in E. Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des V. ökumenischen Konzils* (Bonn, 1966), 87–88. By the 530s, Germia is listed as a provincial town of Galatia II under Pessinus in Hierocles, *Synecdemos* 698.4 (G. Parthey, *Hieroclis Synecdemos et notitiae graecae episcopatum* [Berlin, 1866], 36). By 630 (the earliest reference), Myriangeloï had been removed from the authority of the metropolitan bishop of Pessinus to become a self-governing bishopric, directly responsible to the patriarch at Constantinople (Ohme, *Concilium Quinisextum*, 268–69). This elevated episcopal status may have been a consequence of Justinian's visit there in 563.

140 Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," 55–57, and Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 54; cf. Cline, *Ancient Angels*, xvi–xvii.

141 The most up-to-date and complete collection of inscriptions is A. V. Walser, "Kaiserzeitliche und frühbyzantinische Inschriften aus der Region von Germia in Nordwestgalatien," *Chiron* 43 (2013): 527–619.

142 Niewöhner, "Healing Springs," 113.

143 Niewöhner, "Germia and Vicinity," 55.

144 Niewöhner, "Germia," 347.

145 Mango, "Pilgrimage Centre," 129–30, no. 7 (reading "Thomas," but it's better translated as "Phocas"); Niewöhner, "Healing Springs," 112; and Walser, "Inschriften," 580.

146 Mango, "Pilgrimage Centre," 126–27, no. 1, and P. Nowakowski, *Cult of Saints*, E01005, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01005>.

147 Walser, "Inschriften," 581. Incidentally, there are no sixth-century seals from Germia. The oldest is from the seventh century and shows Michael with a staff and globe (Cotsonis, *Religious Figural Imagery*, 109), just as on Justinian's coins but not on seventh-century coins.

148 *POxy.* 1357, col. 2, line 8: εἰς τὸν ἄγιον Μιχαῆλ ἡμέρα αὐτοῦ (cf. A. Papaconstantinou, "La liturgie stationnelle à Oxyrhynchus dans la première moitié du 6^e siècle réédition et commentaire du *POxy.* XI 1357," *REB* 54 [1996]: 14, col. 2, lines 8–9).

Eudoxias and Goeleon to visit and share in the celebrations as they were known to do regularly. Sometime later, Theodore of Sykeon took part in the assembly at Michael's church of the citizens of Eudoxias and Goeleon,¹⁴⁹ remembering again that it was people from Goeleon in Constantinople who had persuaded John Studius of the importance of Germia's healing waters in the first place.¹⁵⁰ Although it was not personal health reasons that primarily attracted Justinian to Germia in 563, he could still reap the rewards, spiritual and physical, of being a pilgrim like any other. He probably therefore spent time in the healing pool, allowing his aging flesh to be nibbled by the fish. These were the special "doctor fish" (*Cyprinion macrostomum*), flourishing in a warm pool with high levels of hydrogen sulphide. Also present, given its location, was restorative solar radiation.¹⁵¹ While Justinian came to Germia to fulfill his vow of gratitude to Michael for the protection of the archistrategos when his sovereignty was seriously threatened in November 562, he could also feel fortified and renewed by the usual blessings of pilgrimage.

Return to Constantinople

Presumably, Justinian and his party traveled back to Constantinople by the same route that brought them to Germia (Fig. 1). Although possible, there is no evidence that their return journey involved taking a different route, that is, a more direct route that would lead them along the main road to Dorylaeum and beyond there by the more difficult roads to Nicaea.¹⁵² From Germakoloneia, the imperial party traveled back to Ankara, and from Ankara via all the same places along the road to Nicaea. Again, on reaching Helenopolis, the imperial party boarded the barges and ferries taking them across the water toward Constantinople. On Justinian's return to the capital, again as recorded for

later times but probably no less valid for Justinian's time, his party would have been met by the city prefect on the Asian side of the Bosporus.¹⁵³ In late November 563, the city prefect may have been Andreas, who had come under fire earlier in the year when set upon by the Greens during the fierce faction riots in the city.¹⁵⁴ From there, Justinian could have crossed the Bosporus and come up to the Strategion forum or sailed directly into the palace's own landing wharf. Either way, he was met on arrival by the city prefect, Andreas, again.

In retrospect, it appears that Justinian left for Germia early in October 563, began the return journey around 9 November, and was back in Constantinople in late November.¹⁵⁵ Greater precision is not likely. All in all, the journey from Constantinople to Germia may have taken around twenty days. On top of that is the time spent in Germia itself. The return journey is not likely to have taken any less time than the outward journey, even with a small imperial party, and even though Justinian would not have been expected to spend so much time in the major towns along the route as he had done on the way there. If, as suggested here, Justinian left Germia around 9 November 563, he could have reached Constantinople on the last day or two of the month. At a rough estimate, the emperor was away from Constantinople for around fifty to fifty-five days. For all that period, he may well have left responsibility for managing the security of the city and palace to the proven hand of his nephew and imperial successor, Justin. Indeed, this interlude may have strengthened Justin's claim as the likely emperor after his uncle. He was not a Caesar, as Justinian once was to Emperor Justin in 525, but he did hold the unique

149 Eudoxias: *Vita Theodoris Sykeonis* 71.8–9 (Festugière, *Vie*, 58); Goeleon: 161.65–66 (Festugière, *Vie*, 140).

150 Preserved in the *Miracles* of Pantaleon (lines 19–32), edited in Mango, "St. Michael and Attis," 48.

151 Niewöhner et al., "Bronze Age Höyüks," 109; Niewöhner, "Healing Springs," 114, and for the distinctive role of the "doctor fish" at Germia, P. Bouras-Vallianatos, "Miraculous Fish Therapy for Leprosy ('Elephant Disease') and Other Skin Diseases in Byzantium," *BMGS* 40.1 (2016): 170–75.

152 Belke, *Galatien*, 105–6, and Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*," 122.

153 Following the later pattern in Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *Book of Ceremonies*, book 1, appendix (Moffatt and Tall, *Constantine Porphyrogennetos*, 497).

154 *PLRE* 3:76 ("Andreas 7"), and Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.146 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 430.5–17; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 304). He succeeded Procopius (*PLRE* 3:1066 ["Procopius 3"]) as city prefect in April 563 and the next known prefect was Addaeus in January 565 (*PLRE* 3:14–15: "Fl. Marianus Iacobus Marcellus Aninas Addaeus"), followed by Zemarchus and Julian in 565 (list of prefects at *PLRE* 3:1480).

155 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6056 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:240.12–17; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 353).

title of curopalates, which before long, if not already, marked him out as second to the emperor.¹⁵⁶

By the end of November 563, Justinian was definitely back home in the capital. There he entertained an important visit from the Jafnid *phylarch* and Roman patrician Arethas.¹⁵⁷ At that time, Justinian showed no signs of undue fatigue or decline from his recent journey. Following the journey to Germia, Justinian was to live for another two years, but it was not long after returning from his expedition to Archangel Michael's shrine that the emperor became more committed to the "aphthartic" understanding of Christ's earthly reality, or the belief that Christ's human flesh was as incorruptible before his death as it was after it. In the course of these events, late in 564, Justinian engaged in direct discussions with certain African bishops he had summoned to the city.¹⁵⁸ They also disputed with the patriarch of Constantinople, Eutychius, who was dismissed by the emperor in January 565 over doctrinal differences.¹⁵⁹ Then, just a few months before his death in November 565, Justinian was again faced with severe civil unrest outside the gates of his palace. Again, he was required to dispatch military reinforcements. Ongoing battles between Green faction supporters and imperial troops in 565 resulted in considerable loss of life, as well as Justinian's replacement of the prefect Zemarchus with the more pugnacious Julian. Restoring law and order in

the city took the new prefect another ten months, that is, well into the reign of Justinian's successor, Justin II, in 566.¹⁶⁰



As the archistrategos, angelic commander-in-chief Archangel Michael was very important to Emperor Justinian. He was a heavenly guarantor of earthly imperial power and orthodoxy, the emperor's protector against usurpations and threats to his authority, such as the disconcerting conspiracy hatched against him in Constantinople in November 562. This conspiracy almost resulted in the death and deposition of Justinian. It was his most precarious moment as emperor since the Nika riots in January 532 and constitutes the most likely set of circumstances for a vow to present himself at the archangel's site at Germia. Following weeks of planning, in October 563 the emperor Justinian undertook an unprecedented journey from his palace at Constantinople through Asia Minor to the pilgrimage site of Archangel Michael at Germia.

Justinian's journey to Germia, in the light of his activities as emperor both before setting out from Constantinople and on his return, suggests that even in his eighties he was not a sickly or reclusive ruler. Moreover, none of the contemporary accounts of his reign implies any such perspective.¹⁶¹ The eighty-year-old Emperor Justinian was just as engaged as the forty-year-old Emperor Justinian in determining and

156 Lin, "Justin under Justinian," 128. Only a few decades after Justin, Nicephorus explains why, as curopalates in 612, Heraclius's brother Theodore "held the second highest rank after that of emperor which in the language of courtiers is habitually called curopalates" (τὴν μετὰ βασιλεία πρώτην ἀρχὴν κεκτημένον [κουροπαλάτην δὲ αὐτὸν οἱ περὶ τὰ βασιλεία καλεῖν εἰώθασιν]) (C. Mango, ed., *Nikephoros Patriarch of Constantinople: Short History* [Washington, DC, 1990], 40–41, with *PLRE* 3:1277–79 ["Theodorus 163"]).

157 Theophanes, *Chronicle* AM 6056 (de Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*, 1:240.14–17; Mango and Scott, *Chronicle of Theophanes*, 353). The emperor had endowed Arethas with the position of phylarch in 529 when they were both much younger: *PLRE* 3:54–55 ("Ambros"), 111–13 ("Arethas"). Further detail in I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 1, part 1, *Political and Military History* (Washington, DC, 1995), 282–88, and I. Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 1, part 2, *Ecclesiastical History* (Washington, DC, 1995), 780–88.

158 Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle* s.a. 564/565 (A. Placanica, ed., *Vittore da Tunnuna, Chronica: Chiesa e impero nell'età di Giustiniano* [Florence, 1997], 58).

159 S. Roggo, "The Deposition of Patriarch Eutychius of Constantinople in 565 and the Aphthartodocetic Edict of Justinian," *Byzantion* 89 (2019): 433–46.

160 Malalas, *Chronicle* 18.151 (Thurn, *Chronographia*, 431; Jeffreys, Jeffreys, and Scott, *Chronicle*, 305), and Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle*, s.a. 565/566.2 (Placanica, *Vittore*, 58).

161 Apart from the rhetorical flourish of Corippus (*In laudem Iustini* 2.260, with Averil Cameron, ed. and trans., *Flavius Cresconius Corippus in laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* [London, 1976], 170), the characterization of Justinian's later years as indolent and spendthrift overly depends on the retrospective preface to Justinian, *Novellae* 148 (*CIC Nov* 722), usually dated to Justin II's reign in 566 on the basis of a Latin subscription in Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, gr. 179. However, it is doubtful whether this law was issued by Justin, rather than by Justinian (late 550s) as clearly stated by a contemporary legal commentator, Theodore of Hermopolis, who was in no doubt that the law was promulgated in Justinian's time (ἐξεφωνήθη ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις βασιλείας Ἰουστινιάνου: C. E. Zachariae, ed., *Anekdot: Theodori Scholastici Breviarium Novellarum, collection regularum iuris ex institutionibus, fragmenta brevii codices a Stephano antecessore compositi, Appendix Eclogae, fragmenta epitomae Novellarum graecae ab anonymo sive Iuliano confectae, fragmenta Novellarum ex variorum commentariis, edicta praefectorum praetorio* [Leipzig, 1843], 157).

promoting what he felt was the sure path to orthodoxy, and therefore imperial security, under divine favor. Archangel Michael was now the guarantor of both orthodox belief and imperial legitimacy. For Justinian, belief and legitimacy were inextricably intertwined. The expedition to Germia in October/November 563 highlights Justinian's focus on imperial business even at his

advanced age. Recent research at Germia and on angels, including Archangel Michael, helps to make more sense of this episode and to fit it more naturally into the story of the active later years of Justinian's reign.

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